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EIGHT BELLS

A TALE OF THE SEA AND OF THE CANNIBALS OF NEW GUINEA.

BY

HUME NISBET,

AUTHOR OF "DR. BERNARD ST. VINCENT," "THE LAND OF THE HIBISCUS BLOSSOM," ETC.

THIRD EDITION.

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EIGHT BELLS:

A TALE OF THE SEA AND CANNIBALS OF NEW GUINEA.

CHAPTER I.

JOHNNY DUCKS' RECOLLECTIONS.

I WENT to school when I was six years old, and ran away from it, to go to sea, when I was ten. During the four years in which I was whipped by different masters, for in those days there was no school board to protect the tender persons of boys, and masters believed very greatly in the utility of the cane, I did not learn much of the three R's, having been dismissed from three schools, and only saving myself from a fourth and last ignominious dismissal by going off with two companions, equally idle at their tasks, and diligent at working mischief, to join the Channel Fleet, then lying about twenty miles down the river from my native town.

We did not accomplish that object, being destined for other things, but our place knew us no more.

It has always been a consolation to me that if I learnt no other good, still that my different masters

had successfully thrashed into me the power of being able to read a plainly written book, which has always been a comfort to me in my knocking about. I don't think I can accuse myself of being guilty of anything worse than monkey tricks, while also I don't think I was very fortunate in my masters. The only one whom I can remember with affection, and who thrashed me least while teaching me most, died when I was just getting into his ways, and after him none of the others took the trouble to understand me; they thrashed and I revolted, until their arms were wearied with using the cane, and then they kicked me out. Nowadays boys have a better chance.

I learnt to read, and contented myself with that accomplishment, devouring everything in the shape of literature that interested me, books of adventure and the wonders of the sea, until I lost all pleasure in matter-of-fact life, and longed only to distinguish myself as the heroes had done. In the books the heroes were always brave, magnanimous, and good, while virtue was for ever rewarded in the long run; therefore these romances did for me what a better training might have done—gave me exalted ideas of right and a hatred of vice; so that I must conclude that if a boy will only read enough of the tales written for boys, I don't think he will go far wrong, except, perhaps, by being foolish at the start.

Amongst my companions was an undersized, carroty-haired boy, by name Davis Cox, who followed the closest to me in my pranks. Like myself, he did not care much for bird-nesting or torturing of dumb beasts—the game to which most of my other companions were chiefly addicted—but if there was anything afoot in which a smack of danger

was to be found, I could always depend upon Davis. I found even at that early age that boys who liked the best to play with frogs, harry nests, or stone stray cats, seemed to be the least inclined to go to the front when there chanced to be a street fight going on. We generally discovered them lurking in the rear, or blubbering about some blow which would only have made little Davis laugh.

It was about this time there came upon the scene a great hulking kind of a hobbledehoy, who had been a voyage to sea as cabin-boy in a merchant-vessel, and who now was loafing at home with his widow mother. This boy-man, who was called Jabez Carter, used to sit, in all the glory of a blue serge suit, upon the school-ground wall during play-hours, and charm the ears of all the boys with his wonderful legends; he had seen the great sea-snake, and been hailed by the flying Dutchman, with a host of other wonders, which we swallowed up with implicit faith, longing, as we listened, to go out from our comfortable homes as eagerly as the young sparrows long to get out of their cosy nests in the chimney-stacks and see the great world outside.

Some of his yarns we did not think much of, for they were about women whom he had met at music-halls, subjects which did not interest us at all; but we crowded closely about him when he gave us an account of his life on board ship, with the blue waves running past, or the sunny lands which he had seen, where the bananas and the palm-trees grew, and where lions and tigers waited to be hunted. Dreams of kingly sports fired our hearts and kept us in a constant ferment.

A cunning fellow this Jabez Carter was, with an

eye always after the main chance. He gave us his lies, and we gave him our pocket-money for the honour of his company, watching him put into his ugly mouth large quids of tobacco, as we thought sailors ought to do, and trying to imitate his lazy slouch as he lurched heavily along with his hands stuck deeply into his capacious trousers' pockets, and his little washed-out greeny white eyes leering from under his peaked brass-buttoned cap, looking a sample of the kinchin-lay order who could only have imposed upon little simpletons.

"See, yer boys, if yer wants ter be sailors of the good old sorts like I be, just yer make up yer minds an' run away; there's nothin' like it, and no lad o' spirit would stick at school when he might go right off and be the capting of a pirate-ship."

"Were you a pirate, Jabez?" we asked him one summer's afternoon, as we all lay on a grassy knoll, listening to him, and trying to smoke bits of cane.

"War I? you bet I war, and made lots of chink too."

"Did yer now?" we asked, looking at him with that proper respect due to vast wealth which inspires both man and boy.

"Have you got it yet?" inquired Davis, who had a knack of putting in pertinent questions.

"In course I have."

"Here with you?"

"No, not here; I buried it where it's quite safe, in a desert island, which we found out for ourselves in the South Seas, an island not marked on the charts, but I know where to find it when I want it."

"But will not your men"—we never for a moment doubted but that Jabez had been the leader,—"Will not your men go and steal it while you are away?"

"No, lads; my men are all buried with the treasure, he! he! Dead men don't tell no tales, you know."

We shuddered as we looked at that pasty face and those blobber lips, as the little cunning eyes twinkled upon us. Here was a hero if you like, who sailed away to unknown islands with a cargo of treasure, and left ship, men, and cargo all safely stowed away against his return.

"I am going to run away, Davis!" said I, after a solemn pause of entranced horror.

"I'll go with you," responded Davis promptly.

"Now that's what I call manly," said the noble Jabez, as he rolled his quid about his tongue and stuck it into the other cheek, "and afore yer take yer hook, just yer leave me all that ye don't want to take, an' I'll look arter it till ye come back, or ken jine ye."

"Will you, Jabez?"

"In course I will, d'ye take me fer a darn skunk, not to look arter the interists of my chums?"

So it was arranged that Davis and I would take our departure the next morning; our stock of cash was not great, for of late Jabez had been taking care of our ready money as we got it in, and now turned a deaf ear when we hinted that we would like it back.

"No, lads, ye don't want money to run away with, as ye ken easily walk the dozen miles between here and the port, and when ye reach there, all ye have to do is to go down to the first ship lying at the wharf, and book yourselves as either cabin-boys or captings, which ye like, only I think I'd be a cabin-boy rather if I was you."

"Why, Jabez, isn't a captain the best?"

"Wall, yer see that's just as it happins; the capting has all the responsibility, and if the ship is wrecked, he may be tried for robbery, and if one of the passengers go astray, he may be hanged for murder; ye see that's the worst about responsibility, not many as cares for it onless it be aboard a pirate-ship where the capting's responsible to nobody saving hisself, which is easily settled without the same risks."

"I suppose there are no pirate-ships lying about?"

"Not as I knows of at present, or you may bet I'd be off again. Now a cabin-boy is one who has the easiest times in the whole ship, they call him cabin-boy because he lives in the cabin with allays a lot of cabin biscuits to munch at atween meals, an' the sailors there to bring him what-some-never he axes fer; an' no responsibility, no responsibility; why, the whole ship an' all aboard might go down, and no one would think of bothering him about it."

"And what has a cabin-boy to do, Jabez?"

"Wall, his duties be various, he has to see that the cabin clock keeps right time along with the men's watches, and superintend the washing o' the decks, a sort of general hofficer as it was, but with no responsibility."

As Jabez seemed to lay a particular stress on the delight of having no responsibility, we decided that we would be cabin-boys, and began our preparations accordingly.

First of all Jabez Carter asked us what money we had saved by, and when he heard that we could muster eight shillings, he very prudently took charge of five, leaving us eighteenpence each for refreshments on the road, for of course, as he said, we had only to go aboard and take our situations.

We busied ourselves in a secretive manner, making our preparations for a very early start in the morning. Jabez, who said he could wake up any hour, promised to call us both before daybreak, so that we might arrive at our destination about breakfast-time, and have a long day before we were likely to be missed; we made several bequests to our different boy-friends, in the form of books, cricket-bats, &c., all of which our experienced friend took charge of willingly, and promised faithfully to deliver after we were gone, and then we parted to make up our bundles.

"Don't you forget to tie a string round your big toe, and hang it out of the winder; I'll pull it when it is time to get up," said the seafaring one as we parted that night.

I slunk into the house, and, telling them that I had a headache, sneaked off to bed about as wretched a young hound as could well be imagined.

How nice everything looked, in spite of my step-mother's rebuke that I could go to bed without waiting on family worship! How cosy the blankets felt, and what a most uncomfortable sensation that string round my big toe gave me as I turned and tossed about!

If only my father had been cross that night, or my step-mother extra snappish; but he made no remark as I left the supper-table, and she only sighed over my youthful depravity. So I lay and listened guiltily to the chapter which they read, the words coming along the lobby with painful distinctness; I felt that running away wasn't half such a fine thing as I imagined it would be, and wished that it could be put off for some indefinite period.

But my ships were burnt, I had given Jabez my

treasures and committed myself beyond recall with Davis, and I could not get up the courage to brave being accused as a coward, so I suppose it was to be.

When my younger brother came to bed, for we slept together, the first thing he did was to trip over the string which I had tied from my toe to the window, and then as he got hold of it, a string being a treasure, and began to pull, I had to tell him to let go, and explain with a lie why it was there, besides having to get up after he had fallen asleep and arrange it all over again, so that between this and a guilty conscience, it was about as miserable a night as I ever spent.

At last I fell asleep, and dreamt that a mad dog was chasing me while I was running, or rather trying to run, with bare feet, along a very rough road, with that awful demon dog snapping close behind me; at last I was driven into an entry with no outlet, and had to turn upon my pursuer, who caught me by the big toe and hung on, sawing away as if he meant to tear it off. Gradually the pain worked me up to the consciousness of where I was, to find the string hauled from the outside as if some one was hanging on full weight at the other end.

Hastily I scrambled over the bed, the string keeping taut all the while, as if Jabez was drawing it to him as I came, and pulling as if he meant to have my toe off.

"Stop, Jabez!" I whispered from the window, and the tugging stopped suddenly.

"Is that you, Jabez?" I again asked in a whisper, for it was quite dark, and I couldn't see to the ground.

"Yes!" came in a soft whisper from below.

"Is Davis there?"

"Yes!" again came the whisper.

"All right, be ready to catch my bundle."

I went in to get my bundle which I had made up over-night, and flung it out of the window, never doubting that the "Yesses" came from Jabez, as all whispers have a similar sound in the dark.

I had put up the suit which I wore on weekdays, with an extra shirt in my bundle, and now very cautiously stumbled over to the chest of drawers where my Sunday suit was usually laid. Opening what I thought to be the right drawer, I fumbled about till I got hold of a pair of trousers, and began to pull them on.

"Who is that?" I heard in my father's voice, while I vainly tried to pull on these trousers, they seemed like a pair bewitched, and without a termination. I tugged at them and hauled them up, and still the feet would not come out, so I sat down in silence on the edge of the bed with lurks innumerable at the knees, and my feet muffled in broadcloth.

Getting no reply, I suppose my father must at length have fallen asleep, while I had time to find an egress for my feet. In my agitation I could not then reason out the cause of this extraordinary length of leg coverings, nor was it until I was far on my way that I discovered that I had put on my father's most respectable pair by mistake; the loss of these, or his hopeful son—I have often wondered which he regretted the most.

Moments were precious, so I rolled them up at the bottom, and, grabbing at my jacket and bonnet, I made for the window, and breathing down the warning "Look out, Jabez," I dropped lightly from off the window-sill.

It was a drop of about ten feet from the window to the ground, nothing for a slender light-weight as I then was, and I neither expected nor wished for Jabez to try to break my fall, so that I was both astonished and vexed to find myself, instead of touching the ground, grabbed by a pair of strong arms and held tightly up.

"Let go!" I said, trying to shake off the embrace, "I can easily manage for myself."

"Ah! can you, young thief?" responded a surly deep growl as the arms shifted while the hands caught me by the cuff of my jacket firmly.

I darted my head about quickly to see who had me, while at the same time a dark lantern was flashed in my eyes.

"What do you want?" I asked as I recognized in the flash the belt and uniform of a policeman.

"I'll very soon let you know that, my lad," replied my captor. "Bring on the other prisoner, I'll look after this one." As he spoke he turned the bull's-eye to one side and let me see my friend Davis standing in the grasp of the perfidious Jabez, who held with his other hand my bundle.

Davis was a quick lad, and I suppose must have had a hand on his mouth while I made my preparations, otherwise he would have warned me of my danger. I saw by the glance of his eye, as the lamp lit it up, that he only waited upon my signal to make a bolt, and I gave it him at once.

"Come on, you young scoundrels!" cried the policeman, giving me a shove in front of him as he spoke.

"Wait till I sort my braces," I said, fumbling at my trousers-buttons.

I felt the paw at my neck relax for an instant.

"Now, Davis, come on," I yelled with a sudden kick

of the heels against the policeman's shins which made him let go with an oath, while I darted from the yard with Davis behind me, and Jabez lying on his back.

Into the narrow street, with the dawn just beginning to make objects discernible, we rushed, and our traitor mentor with the policeman closely after us, yelling out as they ran, "Stop thief, stop thief!"

We made a wild din down that steep narrow old-fashioned street with our hobnailed boots and the yelling of our hunters. Here and there a window was thrown open and a sleepy head shoved out, while an odd baker going to his work, or a printer returning from his labours tried to clutch us or trip us as we darted past them, and then getting the excitement up of a chase, joining in the yelling and the clattering behind.

It had been raining during the night, so that the causeway stones were slippery and glistening; in front of us the sky was growing pallid behind the chimney-stacks, while as we ran we could just see a confused dinginess of corduroy and moleskins, as a crowd of field labourers were trudging up towards their work, with their reaping-hooks giving out sharp lights as they swung them to and fro. "Stop the thieves!" yelled the crowd behind to the crowd in front, and the labourers spread themselves across the street with their hooks ready to slash at us, and their legs apart.

We had no time to think of our danger, but bore down upon them like an avalanche and broke through them in an instant; as I passed I had time to see the wisps of straw tied under their knees, and to hear the swish of the reaping-hooks as they whistled through the air in their brutal attempts to cut us down; then, as the street took a twist, seeing an entry yawn blackly in front which was used as a short cut, having

several outlets, we darted down, while our pursuers went past with a rush.

"Stop, Davis," I panted, as I drew him into a doorway a short distance from the entrance and listened, holding our breath as well as we could.

The crowd quickly turned and whirled past us as we crouched, and in another moment were to be heard howling in the distance as they scattered down the different branches, not sure which one we might have taken.

"Did they cut you, Davis?" I whispered when it was safe to speak.

"No, Jack, they just missed my leg; are you all right?"

"Quite right, Davis, so let us get into a safer place before they come back."

We crept from our retreat, and moving a few paces up the street, again found another entry at the mouth of which a cart stood with some straw at the bottom.

"Let us get inside this cart, Davis, till they return, and then we can see what next to do."

After we were settled amongst the straw I turned to Davis and said,—

"How did it happen, Davis?"

"Jabez came to me all right and pulled my toe, and I got up and out without any one waking in the house, and came on to your window, where Jabez told me to give him my bundle to hold, and that I was to pull your string.

"I pulled softly at first, but you would not waken—what a sleepy-head you must be, Jack! While I was pulling, with my back to Jabez, I saw a light strike against the wall and over my head, throwing my shadow blackly in front of me."

"The policeman, who must have seen you come into the court."

"I suppose so, but I think that Jabez wanted us to be taken, for he jumped on me as the light struck, and, clapping his hand over my mouth, whispered softly, 'Here is one of them; the other hasn't come out yet,' and so they held me till you came down, and I couldn't get in a word to warn you."

"Then Jabez must be a traitor, and no pirate."

"I think a pirate and a traitor is all one now," responded Davis, with a deep sigh of disappointment. "They take your money, and then betray you when they cannot kill you. I don't like pirates a bit now, Jack; do you?"

"No, Davis; we'll go and hunt the pirates, but first we must punish this one before we go—hush! they are coming back."

We lay down, breathing very low, amongst the straw until they passed, which they did, talking loudly about us—Jabez and the policeman, side by side, as if they were friends, and the labourers and workmen mixed about.

"I expect they have got into some house and hidden," said Jabez.

"No matter, we have the swag and will soon be able to catch them," retorted the policeman. "Come with me to the house and give your evidence."

They went off towards my house while speaking: so after a little while we got up, and followed them, the streets being still wrapped in that semi-obscurity which makes it harder from a little distance to distinguish objects than even during darker hours of the night.

We let them get a good start, and then walked quietly up to the courtyard behind the house.

There was an old elm-tree which grew close against the back-parlour window, the massive branches of which formed a good vantage-ground to look into the room. When the blind was drawn up one could sit on the nearest cross limb and almost touch the window without being seen from the inside, shaded as that limb was with the thick leaves ever rustling and bending against the pane.

When we got into the yard we could see that the household had been alarmed, for all the rooms were lighted up, while from the half-open window floated the sound of voices, those of my father, mother, the policeman, and that degenerate pirate-king, Jabez Carter.

We got ourselves comfortably into the shelter of the tree, where we could see all that passed as well as listen to the conversation, the blind being drawn up and the window left open, as it was generally at nights, a little from the top.

My father and step-mother both were in the scanty garments of the night, he sitting on the easy chair, something like pictures I have since seen of Sancho Panza when acting as governor; beside him crouched the fragile form of his wife with a look of terror upon her thin features, while before them stood the guardian of the peace, pointing out the open bundles which lay upon the floor with one finger, while he tapped with the other the slouching shoulders of our whilom hero.

Jabez had a heavy air and hang-dog cast about him peculiarly his own, which the bluff air he was putting on as he spoke, for he was in possession of the floor for the time, only served to intensify; his voice was drawling and husky with the unmusical huskiness of a

tuneless voice breaking from boyhood's squeak to manhood's growl, the voice of a very commonplace ruffian utterly devoid of grace or courage; to us then sitting upon that branch, and getting our first experience of a thankless world, it seemed as if it would be an easy thing to cow him, and we both wondered at our ever having had any respect at all for him.

"In course I didn't know it was your son, master, a-running away when I saw the bundles a-tumble down."

My place was found vacant, and my bundle had proclaimed both my identity and intentions.

"I'll jist tell you how I came to be on the spot. You see, master, being accustomed to early rising at sea, I had gone out to have a smoke, when I spots a young varmant mouching along with a bundle in front of un, which made me surspicous as it was."

"Why were you suspicious of a boy carrying a bundle?" asked my father, who did not seem to like the look of this candid, seafaring youth.

"'Cos a boy with a bundle at three o'clock in the morning has a surspicous look, don't yer think so, perliceman?"

"In course!"

"A bundle has allays responsibilities tacked to it at that early hour, and a boy has no business to carry responsibilities about with him onless as he is a darned thief."

"Well, what next?"

"Well, master, I followed after him into your courtyard to see what his little game might be, and arter looking about him, he lays the bundle down and goes over to the winder, where he begins a hauling at a line. While he war a-doing on this, I slips back

to the street and sees this yer perliceman standing handy close by, so I says, 'Here, mister, there's robbery going on round the back,' and with that he followed me up till we ketched the fust boy and laid on to the second, as he kin tell yer is all the blessed truth, and wish I may never."

This 'wish I may never' was the common form of solemn swearing with Jabez when he wished to impress his audience that he was telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Davis and I from our elevated position heard it with very different feelings to which we used to listen when we looked up to him from a lower platform. The policeman now took up the thread.

"What the young man says I can swear to; in fact, he collared the first young one and held him while I watched on the other."

"But how on earth did you let them escape when there were two of you?" asked my father impatiently.

"Well, sir, I had got him safe enough, but somehow he slipped through my arms like an eel, and fled for it like a bird, with the other one behind him, after kicking me in the shins, as I can show you."

"Just like our John," my stepmother murmured.

"The tother one, marm," here said Jabez, turning towards her for sympathy, "shoved his darned head into my bread-basket and blowed the wind clean out o' me."

He looked leery and spoke like a vulgar young man, at the which my little stepmother, having always a leaning toward politeness, turned upon him a stony gaze and disgusted face until she seemed suddenly to remember the fact that she was in her nightdress, for

with a little feminine screech of outraged decorum she glanced down at her fluttering robe, and cried,—

"Goodness gracious! I must retire," which she did with a dart like a startled fawn.

That was the last sight I ever had of the woman who occupied my mother's place, a blending of offended modesty and lofty scorn curling up her thin little nose, and a swish of white linen as she fluttered out of the door, leaving Jabez leering after her with his slobbery mouth extended on the grin.

"Where do you think they have gone?" asked my father from his seat, after this pantomime was over.

"I think, master, that they will have gone down by the waterside," replied Jabez.

"Could you find them, policeman, do you think?"

"Well, sir, I cannot leave my beat just now, but I would say this young man might, as he has time on his hands, and it's not likely they'll go far now that their clothes are taken."

"Yes, master, I darsay I could find them for you, if so be it that I was paid for my trouble."

"Very well, there is five shillings each for you for what you have done, and I will make it a pound note when you bring my son back to get what he deserves."

My father looked darkly towards a whip that lay on the table, as he rose to show them out, upon which Jabez grinned even more widely than before, as he and the policeman followed him from the room.

That suggestive glance towards the whip was the last memory which I took away of a kind if hasty-tempered father, and it did much at the time to banish the remorse at leaving them all.

The river! An idea struck both Davis and me at the mention of it; there was a boat lying there which

belonged to a big brother of Davis, who knew where the oars were kept.

He would take the boat and row out to sea till we met some passing ship, and tell them we were all that was left of a wrecked ship. We had both read about such events, and it looked like a proper starting after adventure.

"Come on, Davis; we'll follow Jabez and wallop him for his treachery before we go."

"And take that five shillings from him to pay for what we gave him," returned the practical Davis, as we both scrambled down.

We were not a bit afraid of Jabez now, so we stole round to the front street, and, slipping down by a short cut, took our way to the waterside, determined to wait there for the appearance of our victim.

The town was beginning to wake up as we went along, but only for the early risers, for where the day workers were waiting to be called by the early factory bells we could see thin wreaths of smoke curling upwards from the chimneys of single flats and cottages; men were making fires so as to boil themselves a quick cup of tea or coffee and give one to their sleepy wives before they went forth for their daily labours. These blue white wreaths went up amongst the idle chimney-pots like offerings of homely affection, and melted lovingly amongst the roseate streaks of dawn.

The paid agents of wealth, however, slept on, for they had no inducement to rise and welcome that loveliest of all hours which fly over the lives of men.

We took our way down by the sedges, wet with dew, to where the little boat, in which we were about to start on the world, lay, with the tide lapping its freshly-tarred sides.

Davis got the oars all right, while I arranged the boat, baling out the water with an old tin can left for that purpose, and as I baled a new idea came into my mind.

There was rope in abundance to tie our victim; why not make him a prisoner and take him with us to be our servant, after we had walloped him into submission?

"Davis," said I to him as he appeared with the oars, "let's capture this false pirate and take him with us."

"All right," said Davis coolly; "he'll do to row the boat when we are tired."

So we left the oars ready for use, and with the rope in our hands crouched down amongst some bushes out of sight to wait upon his coming.

We had not long to wait, for hardly were we placed before we saw the worthy pair appear upon the towing-path, their voices coming to us first and warning us to lie close, for now the sun had risen above the distant hills.

"There is no use of yer trying it on, young fellow; I know that yer were an accomplice of the small fry, so shell out that five bob, and think yerself lucky that I am willing to let you earn a sovereign."

"I don't see as how I oughter to give yer the dimes, perliceman, they were my doos."

"Then if they are yer doos, I'll do my dooty, and hand you in as an accomplice."

We saw the policeman seize Jabez roughly by the arm, and hustle him along, and the big sneak turn tail at once, as was but natural for such as he when bullied.

"There's the five bob," he said sullenly, "only leave a fellow a tanner to buy baccy."

"No, young man, when you ketch the boys you will earn a sovereign, and that is quite enough for you."

Jabez sat down upon the bank and looked after the retreating form of his partner with an evil glance.

"That's allays the way with me, I kent keep money nohow, but anyhow I'll try to earn that sovereign if it ken be done."

The path was deserted now, and the policeman too far away to hear Jabez, even if he cried, so we softly crept down upon our victim.

He was a big-made boy, fat and lumbersome, with strength enough to shake the breath from both of our bodies, if he had pluck in comparison with his size, but we knew what he was now with the true instinct of boys and dogs, and we felt that he would succumb at the first bold show we made.

We had read of the South American mode of capturing their victims with the lasso, so we made a flying noose with our rope, and, creeping as nearly as we could get without disturbing him, prepared to throw, he muttering vengeance against the policeman and plans for our capture all the while.

"It's likely that he'll be lying round when I bring home the youngsters, and chivvy that sovereign also, and what will I then have for my trouble I'd like to know?"

"A rope, Jabez, my boy!" I shouted cheerily, as I pitched my noose over his big head, and running back drew it tightly round his neck.

"Murd—" he gasped, as he rolled over with his pasty face scarlet, while he sputtered and choked.

"Hold this, David, while I tie him, and if he tries any sneaking tricks, pull it hard."

David took the noose portion of the rope, while with the other I ran over to where Jabez lay like a half-felled bull-calf.

He made one or two efforts to free himself, while I was tying his hands and feet; when he did so, Davis pulled at the noose, and he gave in at the hanging hint, so that in a few moments we had him transferred from the bank to the bottom of the boat and were loosing away.

"Don't you attempt to escape or sing out, you lubber," we both told him, "or we will have you choked in a moment."

We kept the rope still round his neck, as a safeguard against mutiny, and as we pulled at the oars occasionally gave it a little tug when he became restive or showed a disposition to shout out.

He was a miserable object of contempt as he lay amongst the bilge-water at the bottom, watching our flushed faces as we both pulled away from our native shores with all the glee of a holiday upon us, and the greater delight of having our wronger in our complete power. Boys are like Red Indians in this respect, giving and expecting little mercy when on the war-trail.

As yet we had no definite ideas either regarding what form our vengeance would take towards Jabez Carter, or where we were going ourselves; we would leave the whole matter in the hand of chance. In the case of Jabez we had easy minds, for he was an impersonified humbug, coward, and liar, whom we could keep as a constant source of future enjoyment, for though neither Davis nor myself ever indulged in the torture of helpless animals or insects, we felt no compunction where Jabez was concerned, for had he not deceived

us with false stories, robbed us of our pocket-money and books, and basely betrayed us while pretending to be our friend, besides, worse and vilest crime of all, shown the white feather so quickly, and permitted himself to be captured so easily, that we felt hardly any pride in the results, looking upon him as he lay very much with the same disgust as a hunter might do upon the carcase of a skunk which he had shot by mistake for an antelope. For the matter of our destination, that also did not press upon us, for we were free, with a boat to ourselves, not yet hungry, with a rapidly flowing river bearing us on to the sea and making our rowing easy, and the warm rays of this early September sun gilding the objects which we passed by so swiftly, with a cheerful glory.

We had both lost our bonnets in the scuffle, and had our clothes torn in places and plentifully bespattered with mud; as I pulled along with my eye on Jabez, I now found out the mistake which I had made in my blind choosing of trousers, and felt more than ever convinced as to the impossibility of a return when I saw the sad state to which those sacred church-going broadcloths had been reduced; baggy and uncomfortable as they were, I must now stick to them, nilly-willy, for ever

Round reaches of this pleasant river we swept, with shores receding further from us every mile, for we kept as much as possible to the mid-stream. Before long our dear native town disappeared behind the trees, with its castle on the rock, church spires and quaint gables. We saw fields of corn, wheat, and rye growing golden and ready for the scythe, in some places cut down and nodding in slanting sheaves, in other parts like fields of gold, deep and matted in tone; at

times we passed coal-barges lying at anchor beside dirty-looking wooden jetties and sheds, or sailing sluggishly on that flowing river with its banks of shining slime on either side, where the waters coursed at full flow, with its dank margin grasses and mud-stained rushes down-bending.

Once we had to get out of the wash of a river-steamer, we pulled frantically to one side as far as we could, when we saw the monster snort round the corner, and, when we were safe, lay on our oars, keeping a tight hold on Jabez's neck-rope, for fear he would give the alarm and get us caught. He tried once to open his mouth, but his cry was cut short with a sudden jerk, and drowned in the louder splashing of the great paddles as the steamer swept past us with a shrill yell from her steam whistle, leaving us tossing and rocking for the next five minutes on the vast waves which she had furrowed up.

After going on in this way for about two hours, we all began to feel very hungry, and proposed landing as near the next clump of houses as we could with safety, leaving one on guard over Jabez, while the other went to get some provisions.

"Are you hungry, Jabez?" I asked him.

"Yes," replied Jabez sullenly.

"Then you must give us your money to pay for it, for you can't expect both a free passage and tucker included, you know."

"I don't want a passage nowhere, and I han't got a copper, the perliceman took what I had from me."

"More fool you to give it to him; but you must have some left of the five shillings which you were taking care of for us last night."

"I left it in my chest at home."

"That's a lie, I think."

"So help me never if it is."

"Now I know it is a lie, out with it, or—"

I gave the rope a warning tug, and Jabez knuckled down.

"I've only got a tanner left," said he, wriggling with his bonds.

"Where?" and I tugged at the noose again.

"In my bag, only if you will loose one of my hands I'll get it fer ye."

"Thank you, Jabez, but we won't trouble you that far; search him, Davis, lad, and see what he has got, whilst I hold on by the rope, and choke him if he tries on any of his Nana Sahib tricks."

Jabez groaned heavily as Davis knelt down and turned out his pockets, wherein we found three shillings and sixpence in silver, and twopence in coppers, besides several of our articles which we had given to him to take care of for us.

"What an awful liar you are, Jabez! I don't believe that you ever went out of England."

"Yes, I've been to South Ameriky."

"We'll see if you will know the place again when we get there, then; it will be handy to have a guide in a strange country like that."

"Are you going in this boat there?" asked Jabez in alarm.

"Further than that, my boy."

"Without provisions?"

"Ah! we have you, you know, and you are nice and fat, so we won't run short before we get to your island."

"Oh!" Jabez fairly goggled with horror at these words.

"Is your island far away, Jabez?"

"There's no such a place," blubbered out the coward liar. "Let me go back to mother, boys, and I won't tell on you, so help me never."

"Well, Jabez, if you hadn't sworn that oath of yours we might have believed you, but not now; you are going with us because we may need you, not because we like you, and you'll know where to soon enough; meanwhile your mother will just have to wait like ours for a little bit. Go ashore, Davis, and get our breakfast for us."

We had taken shelter in a little nook where a disused landing-place had been left to go to pieces by degrees; a shady place over which willow-trees hung with long silver-coated leaves, while through the broken posts and half-covered mud scampered dozens of water-rats at our approach.

After a time Davis returned with three of the shillings laid out in plain loaves and some cheap cheese. Davis was a prudent boy, and had laid in a good store while he was at it.

"I bought up the shop, six big loaves at fivepence each, and six pennyworth of cheese, they will do us for a while."

"And what are we to have to drink, Davis?"

"Oh, I have thought on that also; down by the other wharf I saw an old barrel lying, I'm going now to find a bung and get it filled."

Davis soon returned, rolling the barrel along in front of him, from the staves of which spurted streams of water as it was forced along.

"It leaks a little," cried Davis from the road, "but that's only because it has been lying in the sun; with an hour or two's steeping it will be all right."

Jabez watched these preparations for a long voyage with a foreboding look in his piggish little eyes, and as we had no wish to be interrupted by any passers-by, we once more pulled out to mid-stream, the river at this part getting very wide, so that it took a good hail to reach the shores from where we lay.

We sat and rowed, and ate and drifted, contented and careless of the future, all day long, cramming Jabez' mouth with food, which he received hungrily but sulkily, for we had no desire to starve our prisoner, jesting as we stuffed him with the bread, and telling him that we were fattening him up against the future.

"It won't be good policy to let you grow thin, you know, Jabez, will it?"

And Jabez moaned and groaned and grunted for his mother, and ate as much as he could eat of our provisions.

He did not swear, though, excepting once, for although I daresay he felt inclined to do it all the time; we objected to it, as a liberty on the part of a captive not to be encouraged, so we stuck the first bad word before it was right out of his throat and broke it in two with our rope noose, ordering him not try it on again.

I do not think that we treated our prisoner very magnanimously on that first day of our forced sail together, boys seldom do, so that Jabez hadn't a very happy time of it as he lay with his underside wet with the leak, and his upperside baked in the glowing rays of that harvest sun, while the cross ribs of the boat made knobbly places, which bared and indented his soft, unwholesome flesh; sometimes also we wiped our feet on him to show how much we respected him in

his fallen state, forcing him to thank us at such times for our civility, and tugging at the rope until he got over his sulks. On the whole I fancy Jabez would have been more comfortable even on board of the worst hulk afloat than he was with us in that little boat.

But we were happy while the daylight lasted, drifting down that silver river and ever getting nearer and nearer to the boundless sea.

Our water-barrel leaked away all day more slowly as the staves became soaked and swelled, yet at sundown we found that it had run empty, while the river was now getting brackish in its union with the salt flood, so seeing some smoke on the now far-distant bank, we resolved to pull ashore and replenish our stock.

"If you can get any more bread, Davis, lay in a store, best spend all our money that way in case of accidents."

Surely a mother's spirit must have been near me at this moment, guarding us in spite of our folly.

Davis went as before and laid out the three-and-sixpence left of our united funds in bread, and also filled the cask with nice fresh water, it only dripped now, and with a little of the bread made into dough we stopped up the leakage after we had got it aboard, making it water-tight; then once more we turned her nose towards the sea, contenting ourselves with letting her drift with the slow twilight shadows gathering gradually about us as we drifted.

Davis and I had agreed to take our sleep by turns, so the first watch fell upon me to keep, while Davis lay down near to Jabez, and in a very few moments was fast asleep.

It was a dark and opaque night which fell upon us,

as the boat rose and fell upon that rolling tide, now getting the motion of the open sea, and sucking against our planks as it drew us on.

No stars were to be seen in the sky, only the yellow star-like lights now and again shining out from the far-distant shore, or occasionally the ruddy flaring of the smelting furnaces with their gleaming and tortuous reflections twisting like wriggling snakes of fire far down the waters.

Behind our boat the wind blew moist and cool, getting more chilly and stronger as the night advanced, a chilliness and dampness that weighed upon my eyelids while it made me shiver, as I sat with the two oars in my hands, playing with them in the water now and then rather than pulling, more to keep me awake than to help the boat along.

Jabez and Davis were both breathing regularly and deeply as they lay close together, all differences forgotten in the grand uniter sleep.

I noticed that Jabez lay with his back to Davis, who in the impulse of his unconsciousness proved his nature by lovingly embracing the neck of his enemy with his arms; doubtless the contact of that loving boy's arm against his bull neck, still encircled by the noose, made him dream that he was being hanged, for he gasped and snorted every now and again, and tried to throw off the arm.

An infectious sound, the deep breathing of sleepers, with that monotonous lapping and sucking of waters. I bore up against it for a time, but finally succumbed; gradually the boat changed to my own cosy bed at home, and that lapping sound at our sides to the rubbing and rustling of those elm branches against the parlour window.

Hark! I was roused by the sound of bells. One—two, three—four, five—six, seven—eight. Eight bells echoing over the waters, now tossing up and down in rough billows, with a strong blast blowing against my back.

The oars! I spread out my hands in the dark to feel for them in vain, the rowlocks were gone from their sockets also. Heaven help us! On we were drifting upon a stormy ocean, without a sign of land, oarless, and at the mercy of wind and waves.

CHAPTER II.

THE "BLACK CORBIE."

THE darkness passed away, and day came, without lighting up our prospects much, for with the light so grew the storm, which knocked our cockle-shell of a boat up and down the billows without a moment's surcease, until our heads were giddy with the meaningless tossing, and our hearts seemed to be rising to our mouths or sinking down to our heels every other second as she rose or sank, all the while spinning to right or left as the waves found her, through want of proper guidance.

We were drenched over and over again with the rain and spray which fell about us, although our boat, being light, was able to ride over waves and escape dangers which would have swamped a larger one. All we could do was to lie and wait passively on our doom, without even the pluck left to wish for home again.

Our bread, of course, was into paste almost by this time, dancing up and down in the bottom amongst the dirty brine, with the water-barrel crushing them out of shape as it rolled about, checked only by the sides and seats.

Jabez was free, but, like Davis and I, utterly prostrate with sea-sickness and terror; to unbind him had been my last effort as soon as I could see to

unfasten the knots. We did not speak at all to one another, but clung on to the gunnel, jamming our feet between the ribs of the bottom to keep us from being shot overboard, and seeing nothing but driving grey clouds above, white swirling foam and spray wreathing the tops of bottle-green waves, with now and again a white sea-mew circling and screaming over our heads.

For two days we endured this driving and knocking about, with no inclination even for the daintiest food, could it have been brought to us in that yeasty turmoil, and on the third morning, when the sun rose up brightly through a cloudless sky, and over an ocean only slightly heaving as if with long-drawn sighs, we all presented an appearance so pitiful and dilapidated as to have well borne out our tale of shipwreck had there been any audience there to have heard it and seen us.

With dirt-begrimed and bile-tinted hands and faces, we looked a woeful company of three. During the two days and nights when the storm had been fiercest we had been unable to sleep, for fear that we should be washed overboard, and it had only been during the last few hours, when the tempest was losing its strength, that sheer exhaustion had conquered our fears, so far as to let us sleep.

I awoke with a furred tongue and most nauseous taste in my mouth, but otherwise feeling an inclination to eat, which even the salty-flavoured, dirty, damp loaves did not put away.

I tore off a corner, and was just putting it into my mouth, when Davis awoke, also ravenously hungry.

Davis was little, although as old as I was, and ready to follow my lead, yet he was a perfect Bis-

marck in his astuteness, and owing to his prudence and policy during our future adventures in moments of extremity we were able to escape greater dangers which might have stopped our career and this story short. Davis was the best adviser in the world, and eminently adapted for a friend, being content to walk just one step behind.

Jabez was still sleeping with a most discontented and mutinous expression upon his heavy, dirt-mottled, and forbidding features, and as Davis raised himself up he looked at him.

"Jack," he whispered, "we will be much safer if Jabez is tied up again."

"Do you think so, Davis?"

"Yes; we are all in one boat now—lost at sea—but Jabez is a strong boy and very greedy."

Davis glanced over to where our small cargo of damaged bread lay, and I saw the wisdom of his precaution and advice. Yes, Jabez bound would be much easier to reason with than Jabez free.

Therefore we set about it at once, slipping the noose round his neck very gently, so as not to disturb him, after which, while Davis held the rope's end, I finished the job, binding his arms this time only closely down to his side.

I did this very easily, for Jabez never woke during the operation, but only grunted like a pig as I turned him over from side to side. He had been the most horribly afraid during the progress of the storm, making wild lamentations at every thud, probably through greater experience of the power of the storm than we had, and fear is like bodily pain in its action on the mind, very exhausting and sleep-producing after the strain is over.

After we had secured our white elephant against doing further damage, we munched our salt dough, and consulted together on our situation.

No land in sight, and we had no knowledge of where we were; a smoothing ocean all about us, with a straight horizon of deep purple blending into the blue-green at our sides, bluer than it had been during the storm, with a sky like an opal in its crystalline changes of transparent luminosity, and a steady globe of blazing sunlight sailing through that opal clearness and glistening upon the waves, showing in some parts separating lines, while in other places it looked all softly merged into one mass of deep shadow.

No sail or mast broke that circle of horizon; we seemed to be alone upon an immensity of ocean.

Jabez awoke while we were eating, and managed to get an oath right out before we could check it with the noose, when he realized that he was bound once more.

"Give us a bit of that tommy," he growled at length, with a wolfish gleam in his eye, which proved that he had recovered from his bout of sea-sickness.

We fed him as before, but without so much jesting on the subject; life had now begun to present rather a more serious aspect to us, now that we were our own masters as far as the chains of Fate permitted us to be.

From our reading about shipwrecks and castaways, we felt it would be wise to economize our little store, so as to preserve it as long as possible; therefore we resolved to put Jabez and ourselves upon an allowance of bread and water, the water particularly, as our small cask had again been leaking during its

storm-tossing, and was only about half full now when we examined it.

Jabez did not take kindly to his short allowance, indeed he showed more courage and took a harder amount of noose-tugging to subdue his spirit than we had given him credit for. While the food question was being arranged he wolfed his share with extraordinary quickness, and would have devoured his whole day's allowance at one meal, had we permitted him, so that we had reason to congratulate ourselves that we had tied him up when we did.

Mid-day came with a hot sun blazing upon us, drying the salt upon our skin and cracking our lips, while we were tempted again and again to break through our resolves not to touch the water-cask. Jabez grew like a savage beast, and struggled frantically to break his rope, cursing and swearing in spite of all our cuffs and kicks, and only leaving off when he was nearly black in the face with our tugging. He kept us busy all that day and the next, with his savage bursts of temper, alternated with whimpering appeals for water, which seemed to make us thirstier every time we heard the word bellowed out from those swollen, salt-crusted lips.

After one of his wild fits, during the paroxysm of which he had got up and nearly capsized the boat in his struggles, we managed to get the rope about his legs, while he was lying exhausted and panting to recover his breath, and then we secured him to the bow-ring, where he could do no further harm, unless by kicking a hole in the sides may be.

On the night of the third day after the storm had ceased we finished the last drop of water in the cask, sharing this, as we did everything else, equally with

Jabez, who, common-bred to the heart, even cursed us as he took the pannikin between his teeth and drained it at a gulp, and afterwards spat at us from where he lay.

Our bread store was now reduced to one loaf and the remains of another, both rendered into sops almost with the salt steeping which they had. Next morning Davis and I tried but could not eat our share, so we gave it, along with his own, to Jabez, who did not seem to know how to refuse anything, for he devoured them with the same evil grace with which he took everything, while we sat back, weak and worn, on the stern-seat.

"Water! give me some water!" gasped Jabez savagely.

"The cask is empty, and you had the last drink," we replied, rolling our tongues about in the effort to get some moisture.

After that I think Jabez lost his head, for he went on constantly asking for water, and paying no heed to our explanations; all through that day and far into the night, until we both fell asleep in one another's arms, we heard that broken croak mutter the word "water," or else howling in his mad rage, with the stars shining steadfastly above, and the sound of water on every side of us, as it lapped against our frail craft softly and unceasingly.

God was good to us in that sleep, for a heavy shower of rain fell, which, although we did not waken to feel it, moistened our lips and washed some of the incrustations from our cheeks; what did wake us was the yell of Jabez from where he lay bound.

"It's a ship close by, I tell you. Let me go, you blasted brats, till I hail it, will you!"

He was tearing away once more and heaving about at the bow, sending the water splashing in upon us at each violent rock which he gave the boat, We thought he was still raving, so did not reply.

"Wake up, you young fools, and hail, if you won't let me up; I tell you I heard eight bells go a minute ago, an' not a harf mile distant."

"Eight Bells!"

"Yas, that is twelve o'clock on board ship."

"Ship ahoy! ship ahoy!!"

We stood up and sent our young voices echoing along with the broken growl of Jabez, as loud as we could bawl, for several moments.

"Where away?" came back from the darkness in a hoarse bellow, although as yet we saw nothing, for the rain-clouds were still lying blackly in that direction.

"Castaways in a small boat drifting," yelled out Jabez in reply.

"All right; we'll come!" that trumpet boomed back, while sounds of men running along decks with heavy boots and a deep voice shouting, "Lower the yawl there, lads, and see what it is."

If the vessel carried lights, we could not see them from the position in which we lay, but as we strained our eyes in the direction of the sounds, I thought I could make out the dim outline of a two-master, with deeper darkness where the set sails and black hull were lying about half a mile from us. In reality she lay a good long mile, but at sea distance is deceptive to landsmen's eyes, sounds also travelling much further and more distinctly than on shore.

As we looked we saw a light wander down the sides of the hull, from which we knew that they were

bringing a ship's lantern, and were now in the boat.

We hailed each other as they advanced.

"Now, then, why ain't you rowing there?"

"We have lost our oars."

A long silence after this, with only the breathing of the men and swish of water furrowed over by bent oars, while the lantern swung to and fro as it was held aloft over the bow, and sent reflections dancing about in all directions, growing every moment larger and brighter as it came on.

"Hallo! only boys?" called out the man with the lantern, in a tone of contempt, as they drew up to us and shone the light on us, after heaving a line, which we caught and fastened.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"No matter," said he, with a dubious laugh, "I daresay the skipper will be glad to see you, for he likes boys."

The other sailors laughed also at this, and one of them retorted, "The old man will find something for them to do where we are going to."

"Shut up there, Tim," snarled the first speaker, whom I found out afterwards to be the second mate, and the men all took to their oars in silence; then, turning to me, he asked,—

"Have you tied the line fast to your bows?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then lay on and let's get back."

As they turned the boat about and pulled at their oars with our boat towing behind, we now noticed a light half-way up the fore-mast of the vessel, showing that she had swung round to wait for us.

We left Jabez as he was, for we meant to tell the

captain the truth when we got on board, and leave ourselves entirely in his hands. We both felt cheered to think that we were going aboard a ship where the captain liked boys, but wondered a little why the men should laugh at such a thing, which we thought very praiseworthy.

"What luck, mate?" shouted the captain from the ship, as we drew near.

"Three boys, as a special gift of Providence," replied the mate.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the captain, much as a boy-devouring giant might have done, at the news. "That's all right, Spaid; hoist the heroes aboard; we'll find room for them, I think."

"Room enough where they are going," grunted the man Tim to his companions on the seat in a low tone, which, however, I heard, and felt just a thrill of uneasiness as I heard it.

"Hallo! one of you tied up?" cried the mate, as he reached over to help us out, and saw Jabez.

"Yes, sir; I'll tell the captain why when we get up."

"All right, my lad; bound or unbound, ye're all hearty welcome so long as ye are healthy; hoist away there at the bundle."

Another moment and we stood on the deck, the captain in front of us, listening to our tale, with Jabez lying between us where he had been rolled.

I told the story from beginning to end, without any attempt at softening matters, Davis all the while corroborating what I said with a running fire of remarks, and Jabez lying looking with sullen eyes from the deck, but saying nothing.

The light from the lantern was full upon us, while the captain and the watch who were on deck at the

late hour, and now gathered in a circle round us, were in blackest shadow, so that I could not see what kind of man this captain was, beyond the fact that he was very tall and broad-shouldered, with a very deep voice, which sounded with a peculiar rasp that somehow set my teeth on edge whenever he spoke.

"So this lubber has been a pirate, has he?" remarked the captain when he heard our tale.

"So he said at first."

"Well, he'll have a chance of promotion here if he is."

"Are you a pirate, sir?"

"Ay, boy, but one of the right sort, as you will find out; none of your white-livered curs, like this sea-lawyer here," he put out his foot at the words, and gave Jabez a slight kick as he spoke.

"Take the youngsters forward, Spaid, give them something to eat and drink, and after that find bunks for them; loose the lubber, he won't do much harm on board of the *Black Corbie*, I'll go bail, and we'll see what's in him to-morrow."

The tall figure of the captain stalked away to the binnacle as he spoke, and as we were led towards the forecastle we could hear him shouting out his orders in that deep rasping voice of his.

* * * * *

Next morning we were up betimes and had the opportunity of examining Captain Edward Coffin of the *Black Corbie*.

A fine-looking man, swarthy almost as a half-caste, with a great black beard flowing over his strong chest, and thick long moustaches covering lips which only showed thick and sensual when he laughed, his eyes were black as jet and piercing in their gaze, with about as devilish a gleam in them as one could conceive any

mortal being could carry without setting fire to things, massive eyebrows stood out above them like thatch terminating a low and narrow forehead. His nose was aquiline, but broad at the point, with wide-open nostrils, a coarse bold nose, shining and ruddy like his full cheeks.

As he walked the deck with his peak cap and jacket flying open, it was with a rollicking swagger that betokened a fearless, full-blooded flow of animal spirits very taking to a boy's mind. As a boy I could not reason out his characteristics, I could only feel that he was a fleshy man, without any of the timid flesh of Jabez about him. I saw of course that his head was more massive behind the small ears (close pressed against the crispy hair), and at the jaw and chin than it was on the top, an effect that the peak cap tended to exaggerate.

The deck on which he trod was not over cleanly, indeed a general air of utter disregard to order or cleanliness pervaded the whole ship, ropes lying about uncoiled like snakes from belaying pins, hatches carelessly fastened, with odds and ends lying about where they had been flung, the men also moved about loafingly, with unwashed faces, in ragged dirty shirts and pants, all utterly unlike what I had read of pirate ships.

"Well, boys, so you want to be sailors, do you? You have come to the right shop to learn that craft, you go bail for that."

He eyed us over in a sarcastic and jocular way.

"So, my bold pirate, you have been to sea before?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Jabez, touching his cap with a sullen sort of deference.

"Where have you been to?"

"Ameriky."

"Ha! that's where we are bound for now. North or South?"

Jabez scratched his head and considered.

"Ah! I see, on board the pirate ship which you commanded, eh?"

Jabez hung his head, while the captain looked at him with grim humour.

"Ha! ha! I guess your pirate frigate was a coal-heaver from Newcastle to London, eh?"

No reply from the hang-dog Jabez.

"And so you tried to gull the boys, did you, with your old-fashioned yarns? Well, well, I wonder that such thin stuff could take any one in; however, I'm obliged to you all the same for their company, and to them for yours, so we won't quarrel about how you did them."

He turned to us and continued,—

"I'm going to be a good friend to you all if you behave yourselves, better than many a father, I can tell you, for I'll teach you a good trade, and afterwards, if you don't like the sea, set you up in business when we get ashore, so that you will never want to look for work again, no, not so long as you live. What do you think of that now? don't you rather fancy that your crazy old boat there was a lucky boat to bring you across such a kind-hearted fellow as I am, and such a smart little vessel as is this *Black Corbie?*"

We both said how gratified we felt, only Jabez looked sulky and said nothing.

"Now, then, you hulking lubber, can't you thank Captain Coffin for his kindness?" roared Spaid, the second mate, as he rushed forward and dealt Jabez a full hard kick behind.

"Belay there, Mr. Spaid, for the present; the calf will have enough of that before we say good-bye, if he can't do better than he has done now. Say, boy, did you ever go aloft?"

"No, sir," muttered Jabez, rubbing himself. "I looked after the pigs and poultry aboard."

"Ah! you were Johnny Ducks, were you? Well, I'll give you a rise this time. See if you can find your way to the fore-top before I can count twenty, or else I'll give you twice that number with a rope's end."

Jabez looked with a piteous eye at the coal-black orb which blazed upon him with that devil's mirth, while his legs shook and his cheeks grew like dirty tallow.

"I can't do it, sir; I shall fall overboard."

"One."

"Spare me, capting, this time."

"Two."

Jabez gave a howl of horror as he sprang to the shrouds and got upon the first rung.

"Three, four, five, six."

Jabez had got up seven of the rungs and now hung limply without making an effort to get up further.

Captain Coffin put his hand into his jacket side pocket and pulled out a revolver, which he cocked and pointed at Jabez.

"Look aloft, you cur, and mount, or I'll blow your mongrel brains out. Eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve."

Jabez sprang with a sudden rush, missing his foothold at every second step, while some of the unwashed crew stood below looking up and laughing boisterously at his errors.

Jabez reached the trestle-trees by the time the captain reached fifteen.

"To the cap, you lubber, to the cap!" shouted the

captain as Jabez hung like a terrified monkey on his perch.

"Sixteen—seventeen—eighteen," the skipper was counting slowly, as Jabez made the second ascent.

"Nineteen—twenty."

Jabez had touched the cap.

"Bully for you, my boy," observed the captain, as he carelessly dropped his pistol back again into his outside pocket. "Now stop there till I tell you to come down."

He pulled from his other pocket a strong green cigar and slowly lit it, holding the match in the hollow of his hand against the wind while he lit it, after which he flung the still burning match carelessly upon the deck.

"That's the way that I cure cowardice, my boys," he remarked; "you don't need that cure, for you have proved yourselves to be gritty, so you can have a holiday for the next few watches while you learn the ways of the ship. Knock about and do what you can to make yourselves useful, till I can think of billets for you. Mr. Spaid, come this way for a moment."

The captain swaggered aft with Mr. Spaid as he spoke, leaving Davis and myself to look round the ship, and Jabez clinging to the fore-top cap like an ugly wart.

"What do you think of this change, Davis?" said I, when we were once more by ourselves. "I think it's going to be jolly, Jack, don't you?"

"Just what I always thought life aboard ship would be, only I wouldn't mind if the deck was cleaner."

We both looked round on the large stains of old and new tobacco-juice which lay scattered about, and

then at the mate and captain as they stood upon the raised poop, talking.

Mr. Spaid was an undersized man, with a wan face and a faded-looking, pointed beard, who did not appear at all like a sailor, or as if he had the strength to give such a kick as he had given to the graceless but unlucky Jabez.

We went over to the galley, and stood at the door, looking at the negro cook, as he prepared dried fish-balls for breakfast.

"Come inside, young genlemen," said this son of Africa when he saw us, and we entered his sanctum unsuspiciously.

We saw him throw some reddish powder upon the stove top as we entered, and then go on calmly with his work.

"Would you mind shutting the door?"

We did so.

"Thank you, young genlemen."

He was a gentlemanly cook, if sable-hued, with large brown eyes and startling whites.

"You'll have a gay time on bo-ad this yer ship, you, sah—I hope you are well?"

I felt a burning and choking sensation in my throat as he spoke, with my eyes smarting; Davis also seemed as if he was crying, but the negro was cool and calm.

"Not thinking ob de ole folks at home, eh?"

We both rushed to the door, blind and gasping, which, after what seemed an eternity, we managed to fling open and stagger outside.

"Don't mind me, genlemen, I was troubled with the same ting when fust I left home."

We did not find out for some time afterwards this stale cayenne trick of the innocent-looking negro.

The men let us go pretty much as we liked over the deck; they loafed about without making a single attempt to clear up, with little to do apparently, for the vessel was forging along with square sails before a fair and steady easterly breeze along a sea covered with small curling wavelets.

She stood on her tracks as steady as a rock, the decks slanting slightly, so that one might have fancied themselves on dry land only for that slant, so motionlessly she ran on her course to those on board, making her thirteen-and-a-half knots, while she seemed to be standing, and the sun shining down from white clouds with great lake-like interspaces of deep blue.

She was flying south-west like a great white swan over a laughing sea, and seemed to rejoice in her present triumph of sails over steam.

By-and-by, when the fresh sea-breeze had cleared our eyes from the effects of the roasted cayenne pepper, we found our way over to the hen-coops and pig-styes, where we stood watching them feed as if they were in their own farm-yards.

We watched the gallant yellow cock strut about like a born gentleman and give place to his score of wives, standing aside, and looking at them feeding with indulgent pride, or directing their attention to the tit-bits, abstaining himself from touching anything until they were satisfied.

It was the same in the duck-coop, where the drake gave, like the cock, daily, but disregarded, lessons in the art of politeness and gallantry to those unwashed scum of the earth who were feeding them up only to kill and eat them.

The pigs were more human in their behaviour, for they all scrambled for their grub, burrowing their

snouts into the trough with disgusting slobberings, the boars shoving the sows roughly on one side and trampling upon them in their eagerness to get the most to themselves first.

"Isn't that old pig just like Jabez?" said Davis; and we laughed merrily as we summed up the resemblance point by point.

The fowl-coops and pig-pens were ranged on each side of the forecastle doors, and where we now stood we were hidden by the side projecting, which was called the carpenter's shop. As we were watching the pigs feeding we could hear the rough voice of the old sail-maker as he conversed with the carpenter, while they both worked at their different trades together, the sail-maker sitting near the door, with his canvas over his knees, stitching away, and the carpenter at his bench.

"So we have three fresh hands for the silver-mines shipped last night," we heard the carpenter say to the sail-maker, who replied,—

"It's a dashed shame, chips, to let in boys like that, downright slave-dealing, I calls it."

"Ay! our skipper hain't much conscience where boys is concarned."

"The voyage afore last we shipped twelve cabin-boys, and nary a one on them ever came back; the old man is a deep 'un, for all his bluff, open, cheery ways, and makes a pretty penny over them cabin-boys."

"I don't see as how the game's worth the trouble," said the carpenter. "It's risky if it got spread about, an' then there's the feed out."

"Oh, Capting Coffin don't overfeed 'em; besides, he charges a passage out for them at the ordinary rate, with £20 a head when he sells them."

"Wall, all I can say is that he ken afford to be hearty with the poor devils; I don't suppose none o' them get ever back again."

"Devil a one ever sees daylight arter they gets below ground in the South American silver-mines; it may be months or years as they have to slave, but they are life 'uns, every mother's son on them."

"Don't he ever get inquiries made?"

"How can there be? He looks out for runaways an' horphan waifs as have no friends to ax nasty questions. Lor, it's as safe a game as skittles."

"Wall, I don't covet his chink, that's all I says," replied chips, drowning the rest of the conversation with his plane.

Davis and I looked at one another with blanched cheeks and starting eyes. Was this the life employment that this honest, laughing devil designed for us, to be sold into hopeless slavery in the South American silver-mines?

* * * * *

Things seemed different, somehow, as we turned from that pig-sty, and a great weariness and hopeless dejection fell upon us, with such a sickness at the heart that we could have dropped overboard and ended it all without much concern; it takes a good many lessons before the young heart gets the proper tortoise case to enable it to go through the world without regard to the treachery of man.

We were prepared to like the captain so much, that rollicking, freebooting swing had won us over so completely, that the bitterness of having to regard him as an enemy was worse than the thought of the danger we were in.

"What do you think now, Davis, of the sea?"

"That the sooner we get into our boat again the better," quoth Davis.

So we resolved to meet cunning with cunning, and wait till our chance came for escape from this vile white slaver.

At noon the watch was changed again, four hours off and four hours on, with the dog-watch from six till eight in the evenings, when the men were supposed to take it as easy as sailors and housekeepers ever can rest, with a ship for ever going, and a house to look after constantly.

With the change of the watch came up the first and third mates, while the captain and second mate went below.

Mr. William Payne was the name of the first mate, a lanky man, with nothing uncommon about him excepting a very baggy and bepatched pair of trousers, which appeared to have been manufactured by a fond mother many years before, when he first went to sea, perhaps before he had won his certificate, and still clung to as tender tokens of departed joys.

He looked languidly as he passed us on the deck, without betraying the slightest degree of interest in us, and gazing aloft, as a sailor always does on coming to deck, discovered Jabez still at the cap where the rollicking skipper had carelessly left him; he made a speaking trumpet of his hand, and ordered him to come down.

Mr. Payne did not speak much to any one, walking backwards and forwards with his hands behind him, and his head drooping upon his narrow chest, as if he was only trying to make the four hours' watch pass away and get down below again, but I noticed that the men on his watch did not loaf as the others had

done, but tried to make jobs for themselves, and appear as if they were working. The third mate, by name Pimplett, a fussy little fat-beamed young man of about twenty-two, with short, wide-set legs, and a fair, smooth, full-moon face of the colour of a newly scraped pig, waddled about, puffing and swearing amongst the men, ordering them about here, there, and everywhere, with all the importance of a lately won certificate.

He found work for us three boys before he had been a moment on deck.

"Here, you young swabs," he shouted, "go forward and clean out the poultry coops."

He pushed a squeegee into my hand, a couple of swabs to Davis, and, pointing to a pail with a rope attached to it, told Jabez to go and draw water for us.

While Jabez was in the foretop we had felt the dawning of a pity for his luckless position, and an inclination to be friendly with him when he came down.

But although stiff with his long punishment, it did not seem to have done his disposition any good, for he moved with such a grudging air towards the bucket that we were not at all surprised to see Mr. Pimplett seize a belaying-pin from out of its socket and lay it across his back with the cry, "Look alive, lazybones, or I'll pack you up aloft again in double quick time."

Jabez was one of the few unlucky individuals who neither deserved nor could awaken a kindly interest in any one; in the first place he did not comprehend the quality of gratitude, but took a favour as gracelessly as he did a kick, with only the difference that the kick made him sometimes do what was wanted, which the favour or kindness never did.

His chronic state was boorish surliness, having as little sense of humour as he had of gratitude, with an overlying crust of vanity and conceit, which fortunately for him prevented him from seeing what a disagreeable cub he was.

We went forward to our tasks willingly enough, for we were glad to get something to do, feeling sorry that Jabez had so little adaptation about him, but, in spite of all his want of spirit, would fly in the face of Providence when there was no occasion for it. As yet, none of us had anything to complain about on board of this ship; that is, we would not have had, if we had not heard that conversation between the carpenter and sail-maker, and had we been asked to go aloft, would have mounted the shrouds with pleasure, delighted to show our agility; therefore we both wondered why Jabez should show the white feather in the first instance, and go towards that pail so unwillingly in the second, even while we pitied him, bad as he was, for getting so many cuffs.

It was not the easy task to fill that bucket that we imagined it would be, as I found out afterwards when Jabez, in his own uncouth way, ordered me to go and fill it for him when we had used the first one; as no one was about, he could afford to lean on his swab and play the tyrant. "And look alive," he said as he lurched forward his heavy foot to kick at me, as he had been previously kicked by Mr. Spaid. I noticed a grin of malice upon his face as I evaded his foot and went over to the side to get the bucket filled, which made me feel sorry that I had ever pitied him.

"Halloa! youngster," observed one of the men, as he saw me mount the taffrail and prepare to pitch over the bucket, "what are you going to do?"

"Fill this bucket."

"Wall, I would say kick the bucket, if you go about it that way, why, you hain't got the end fast."

"No, I can hold the rope."

"Can you? wall, that's more'n I could do again such a sea. Who axed you to get it filled?"

"Jabez," I replied innocently.

"Wall, all I can say is that Jabez ought to be in the bucket when you send it over. Take my advice, boy, and don't do all that this Jabez axes you to do, if you want to see your mother again."

"Where is the danger?"

"Danger! why I've seen more'n eight boys afore this sit on the rail as you are doing now, with their bucket one moment, and the next be over two miles behind us, and drowned afore we could get the boats lowered."

I shuddered as I thought upon what I might have done had there been no one but Jabez to have warned me.

"That 'ere skunk who came with you ought to be trailed abaft for that same trick o' his, for he's been to sea, and must know the danger. Didn't he get the job to do?"

"Yes, he drew the first bucketful in."

"Ay, and knew the strain of it, you bet; see you."

He took the bucket from me, and, after lashing the rope end to the nearest belaying-pin, pitched the bucket over, letting it run easily through his hands till it became taut and the bucket rushed through the water, I saw that he pitched it just the opposite direction to which I was about to do, that is, towards the bows, letting it drift behind and so not strain too quickly.

"There! that's how to fill a bucket; now try and draw it aboard."

I took the rope and tried to pull, but all in vain, the bucket seemed to be glued to the water or else filled with lead.

"Now, then, this way," he gave it a sudden jerk and began to pull it along the spray hand over hand.

"Try if you can do it now," he said, when he had got the rope in about a foot and a half.

I reached over and took hold of the rope firmly with both hands.

"Have ye got it?"

"Yes."

"Now, then," he darted one hand from the rope and caught me by the cuff, when he let go with the other.

The instant he let go, I was hanging over the sea with my arms nearly wrenched from their sockets, and the bucket in its first position.

"That's what I calls a practical sea lesson," observed the sailor, as he lifted me on to the deck again, "and don't you forget Billy Johnson when you come into your fortune for giving it."

He drew the bucket in and handed it to me.

"Take that to Jabez, and tell him to get the next bucket hisself, an I'll take care to let the mates of his watch know what kind a coon he is!"

I took over the bucket to Jabez, and saw a decided shade of disappointment cross his heavy face.

"Did you draw in that yer bucket yourself?"

"No, Jabez Carter, and you know I couldn't!" I looked at him full in the face as I handed it to him, without saying any more; his little eyes twinkled viciously at me as he returned my stare, after which

I went over to where Davis was mopping out the hen-coop, taking up my squeegee and following after him as he used his swab; we left Jabez to his own congenial company and the pigs.

Billy Johnson told not only the men, but the mates and captain, what they all considered to be a dastardly attempt to cause my death on the part of Jabez. After which he led a miserable life above and below, the mates and men kicking him about and giving him the most degrading tasks; and the captain, savage, I suppose, at this attempt to defraud him him out of 20*l.*, encouraged them also, and amused himself by kicking and cuffing the unlucky one whenever he came near him; so that Jabez at last grew more like a mangy mongrel than ever, with the marks of bruises and cuts upon his face and blistered horny hands.

We also fell into our places on board after the first day, running between forecastle, caboose, and cabin, washing dishes, polishing brasses, hauling with the men at ropes and waiting on both officers and men alternately, going into no watch in particular, but sleeping when and where we could, and keeping out of the way of Jabez, who was for ever trying to return to us the rough usage which he received from the sailors. He having gone into the first mate's watch, while our duty was chiefly with the captain, however, we did not see him as often as we might have done.

My father's broadcloth trousers were, alas! black no longer, but presented a white and shiny appearance, which would have broken the owner's heart could he have seen them in their fallen state. On the second day of my service on board the *Black Corbie*, I got an old sail-maker to cut them down to right length for me. "You'll need to look respectable when

you get ashore, won't you?" he observed, looking over his horn-rimmed glasses at me with a glance half-pitiful and half-sarcastic, and I, knowing well what was in his mind, with the need there was for keeping my own counsel, shivered as I looked down on my naked legs and said nothing,

"There, youngster, a proper pair of sailors go-to-meeting breeches for you, the right width in the legs too, if they were only the proper colour."

I pulled them on, bracing them up to my arm-pits with the short legs flapping around me like sails, as I thanked the old man and staggered towards the cabin, it being the captain's watch below.

Captain Coffin was always boisterous and jovial, whether the wind was fair or foul; he issued his orders in a hearty if rasping voice, and when he had occasion to fling a belaying-pin at one man, or knock down another with a marline-spike, he did it always with a rough jest. This jocular manner, however, did not prevent him from kicking out, or laying on with his full force, so that I doubt but sufferers found his cheery way of administering a rebuke about as hard to endure as another man's rage, for Captain Coffin laughing, singing, swearing, or kicking, had always that diabolical blaze of mirthful mockery in his wicked black eyes.

When the wind blew up freshly and threatened to be a hurricane, then he seemed also to grow more uproarious in his merriment, and at these moments, if the more cautious Mr. Spaid suggested the taking in of sails, he would curse and defy the Almighty so horribly and with such a sultry glow upon his face, that he seemed like an angel of hell defying heaven.

One night we had a sharp thunderstorm, with wild

flashes of lightning, which played about the masts as if they would strike them every moment; it was Mr. Payne's watch, and he had seen to the conductors and sails, for wild gusts were pouring upon us with the flashes.

"May Heaven blast and strike me dead with the next flash, if I'll have a rag ruffled this night when my friend the devil is out with his merry imps! Down with every stitch and let her drive."

"She'll spring her masts if you put on more canvas," observed Mr. Payne quietly.

"Let her spring and be ——! Down with the blankets."

The men sprang up the rigging, and soon had every sail bulging or flapping furiously from the yards, while Mr. Payne continued his walk with his usual indifference.

The ship did not spring her masts that night, but the captain terrified our young souls and made our hair rise with creeping fear with his horrid blasphemies and awful jeers at each blaze of lightning as it came near, calling the Almighty a coward, and daring Him to strike him dead, while the vessel madly plunged forward or stopped still as the gusts came and went, her planks creaking with the jerks, and her masts bending like whips, a copper radiance seeming to come from and light up his handsome face, for we could see it in the dark between the flashes, with laughing, coarse, open lips and dazzling white teeth, as he stood upright with his black-bearded head thrown back, his clenched right hand extended towards the sky, and those two superhuman flames beneath his dense eyebrows.

The last half-hour had nearly gone by since five bells had struck, which was half-past ten in the night,

as he stood there cursing and laughing, with the storm rumbling away over our heads behind, and now the bell once more sounded.

One—two, three—four, five—six!

A pause followed the six bells, and then there came distinct and clear—

Seven—eight!

"Who struck that bell?" shouted out the skipper, leaving off his melodramatic attitude and striding over to the rail which separated the poop from the main deck.

"I did, sir," replied Billy Johnson, touching his cap as he spoke, "that is, I struck the right hour, six bells, and the devil must have done the other two, for it wagged o' its own accord arter I had hung up the rope."

Captain Coffin glared at Billy for a moment, to see if he was not jesting, and then, without replying, turned towards the companion-ladder, saying to me as he passed, "Bring along my grog water."

As I went over to the galley for the copper kettle, I remembered that I had twice before heard "Eight bells" sound out like this; once when I had lost my oars, and again when the *Black Corbie* had found us.

Was it a warning of some other danger before us?

CHAPTER III.

THE "FLYING FOX."

WHEN I returned to the cabin with the hot water I found Captain Coffin sitting by the table, still in his wet clothes, with a bottle of rum and some glasses beside him. Mr. Spaid had not yet turned out of his bunk, but he came into the cabin in another moment, and took his place without a word.

"Have you any sisters, youngster?" asked the captain, as I entered and set down the kettle beside him.

"Yes, sir, two at home."

"Are they at all like you?"

"No, sir, they are both dark."

"That's a pity, for if they had been like you I'd have brought them out next voyage to keep house for us when we start our new business in America."

He laughed wildly as he made this dubious jest, so also did Mr. Spaid with a weak snigger, as they both proceeded to fill their glasses.

"Where is your chum Davis to-night?"

"He has gone forward, sir."

"Then go and fetch him; I wish to hear you say your prayers before you turn in."

I went out to seek Davis, and found him crouching up against the stove end of the caboose, the thunder-

storm not yet over, although the lightning flashes were at longer intervals.

"Come, Davis, the captain wants to hear us say our prayers."

We both went back again to the cabin, wondering at this new freak of the wicked skipper, and stood before him with downcast eyes and trembling limbs, for we felt completely cowed before those glaring eyes.

"Now, boys, you see I have proved to-night that there is no God, or else He surely would have struck me down dead when I asked Him."

We shivered without answering, while a wild gust of wind shook the ship from stem to stern.

"Here's a glass of nice sweet grog apiece for you if you say after me, 'There is no God, except the devil, to look after us now, and I defy him to do his worst.'"

"We never tasted grog, sir, and do not want it, if you please."

"Don't you, by ——! Let me tell you, my lads, that when the skipper of the *Black Corbie* asks you to do a thing you've got to do it, although the angel who threatened Balaam and his ass stood in the way with his flaming sword; so up with that grog and out with that little prayer, or else I'll flay you alive, darn me if I don't."

Captain Coffin glared upon us with his basilisk eyes until our young hearts grew sick with horror, so like the enemy of mankind did he look with those lightning flashes blazing now and again through the cabin.

"Now, are you going to begin or are you not?"

Davis put his hand into mine for courage, and at the touch I felt the blood which had been standing still at my heart rush on again warm and free, and with a spontaneous burst of unity we both blurted out,—

"No, sir, we cannot."

The captain was between us and the deck door, while the companion-way he had bolted as he entered, so that we had no escape. As we spoke he rose up slowly with a broad laugh, showing his strong white teeth, and came round the table with his hands outspread to clutch us, and the fingers closing and unclosing like the claws of a tiger, we retreating all the while slowly as he advanced, with our eyes fixed upon his, like birds fascinated with a serpent, yet never for an instant thinking of yielding to his fiendish commands.

We both felt as if under the influence of a nightmare, as we retreated with feet as if weighted down with ton weights. A few more steps, and he must have us.

Hark! In a pause of the blast and the thunder-pealings, eight bells are sounding again; we can see that it is right this time, for the chronometer is hanging up in front of us, and it is at the stroke of twelve.

As the echoes of the last bell are still vibrating, and the captain is almost upon us, our deliverance comes. Such a blaze of light burst through the cabin, so intense and white that before it blinded us we seemed to be able to penetrate the closed door and see the whole deck.

Then, as the captain sprang back with the shock, and Mr. Spaid gave a wild yell, we heard a mighty crash, and the doors were burst open, while Billy Johnson rushed in crying out,—

"The fore-mast has gone by the board, sir, and the ship's a-fire, struck by a thunderbolt."

The skipper had no more time to trouble himself about us two boys in his hurry to save himself.

The thunderbolt had rushed straight down the lightning-conductor of the fore-mast, which, with the usual carelessness on board, the men had forgotten to pitch overboard; as it rushed down it shrivelled up everything in its course near it, leaving behind its passage shrouds, rigging and sails a crackling mass of flame, which, with the split mast falling over by the pig-pen, quickly communicated with the rigging of the mizzen, so that we could see the flames running along the tar-coated lines towards the yards, in spite of the wind which was blowing from the stern.

As for the bolt itself, it had gone right through the bottom and into the sea.

Mr. Spaid no longer wore the air of enjoyment with which he had been watching our terror before, but in an instant showed an alacrity only second to that of the captain, as they both sprang past the seaman at the door and issued their orders as if one voice.

"Cut down the boats, lads, and into them in double quick time, if you don't want to be all blown to blazes."

Little jets of flame were now reaching up from the sides of the fore-hatch, while both larboard and starboard watches rushed in compact bodies to cut down the boats from the sides, never making a single effort either to cut away the blazing mast or put out the flames which were licking up from below.

Davis and I, as we stood at the cabin door, watching the men working at the boats, or fighting their way in their shirts and pants from the forecastle, all in a panic of fear, and lighted up by the red light, wondered at their haste, for the flames looked easy to put out as as yet, and at them lowering the boats without taking time to put in a single article of food or water,

when they might rather have poured water down the hatches; it was only long afterwards, when we met Billy Johnson again, that we learnt that the principal cargo going to the Southern States was gunpowder and ammunition, and that they expected to be blown up any moment.

Besides, sailors as a rule, although cool under almost any danger, are apt to lose their heads when the danger is a ship on fire.

To us it meant nothing more than an exciting sight, with the sense that through it we had been delivered from the clutches of our enemy. We could see Jabez working with the men, but kept where we were, feeling no desire to accompany Captain Coffin any longer on his voyage.

By the time the long-boat and dingey were lowered the mast fell with a splutter from the ship's side and floated away behind, blazing with fluttering ribbons of crimson sails, and golden threads flying about it, the vessel still forging ahead with the mizzen-mast and sails standing untouched.

Over by the forecastle the pigs were squealing horridly, while the fowls quacked and clucked in a state of great excitement.

We saw the men scramble over the side helter-skelter, and get into the two boats, kicking Jabez, who wanted to be first over, on his back upon the deck, the captain standing and ordering them to their places; then, as he also prepared to jump over, without so much as a look in our direction, Jabez sprang up and laid hold of him by the leg, saying, "Take me also, sir."

Captain Coffin looked over his shoulders at the abject figure clinging to his leg as he knelt on the

taffrail, while a sardonic smile wreathed round his prominent nose.

"I leave you, my pirate chief, in command of the *Black Corbie*—Get!"

With the word "*Get*," he kicked out his foot square into the face of the suppliant, sending him flying and bleeding right up against the cabin end, while he himself dropped lightly into the long-boat.

In another moment we could see the two boats crowded with figures between us and the blazing mast remnant, with the stalwart form of Captain Coffin looming blackly as he worked his way to the stern of the long-boat; then they passed into the darkness of the night, and we were left alone upon the blazing ship.

* * * * * *

"Davis, do you mind once when we killed the sparrow by accident as we were throwing stones?"

"Yes, Jack, and how you put it into a hole and built stones round it, and then we both knelt down and prayed that God would give it its life again."

"That's it, Davis, and how, when we lifted out a stone, which we called the door, after we had prayed, that the dead sparrow flew out and sat chirruping on the rail as if nothing had happened."

"Yes, Jack, but he left a drop of blood behind."

"Davis, let us pray now, for we need it as much as the sparrow did then."

So we clasped our hands together, and, kneeling down on the deck of that doomed ship, asked God to help us in our extremity, with that directness which only boyhood and utter faith can express; we did not put off time with circumlocution or stale phrases of fulsome flattery to the Almighty; we only said,—

"O God, help us out of this!"

And the answer came as direct as it was asked.

"See, yer young fools, get up and help me down with the boat we came in."

It was Jabez who stood beside us, sputtering and holding his swollen nose, from which the blood was still pouring. Our prayer had been heard, for they had evidently disdained our little boat, and there it swung from the davitts, waiting upon us, and lighted up by the glare of the advancing flames, now rapidly growing bigger, and setting fire to the forecastle and bows, but not yet gaining in our quarter.

With some considerable trouble we got the little boat over the side and settled in the water, upon which Jabez clambered in and held on to the line.

"Get a couple o' oars or summat."

We ran over to the side of the davitts, where we saw some spare oars lying, and, bringing them over, handed them to Jabez, who took the first one from Davis and laid it along the seats.

"Now hand me yourn afore you get over."

I handed him mine and prepared to get on the rail, when I felt a blow slant from my head which sent me rolling back upon Davis.

"Get," said Jabez, who was of an imitative turn, and used the same expression which Captain Coffin had used to him, as he let go the painter and drifted behind.

"Yo!" he yelled out to us as he receded; "you had best go down and pray now, for, he! he!! you are standing above a hundred ton o' gunpowder, and will soon get up to heaven, he! he!!"

And Jabez, consistent to the last, disappeared as the others had done into the darkness.

* * * * * *

We stood dazed for a moment looking at one another all the while, as from the fore-deck danced lurid forks of light, getting widespread and escaping in odd places between the joinings of the planks, the pitch of which was running along in blazing lines and bubbling up where it had not caught fire; above our heads the fire was smouldering and looking nearly out along the tops, only showing where they were still creeping on at odd places very slowly with the wind against them towards the mizzen-yards, the fore part of the vessel being now a blazing mass, which, as she plunged along, sent out streamers in front and flying shreds of flame, that scurried away and circled high in heaven as they were torn off from the main mass by the storming gusts, whirling as they flew like St. Katherine's wheels.

As we still looked at one another with that lurid light waxing brighter, the sound of the outcry from the poultry coops reached our ears and gave us an idea. No need to ask twice for a favour, if the first request be sincere enough, and from the soul, to reach heaven.

Grasping our knives in our hands, we started along the deck towards where the fowls were screaming, with the deck growing hotter as we drew nearer to the fire.

The pigs were silent now, for the flames from the falling mast had roasted and smothered them before it broke away, so that we could only devote our attention to the duck and hen coops.

To cut the moorings and pitch over the hen coops was our first effort, they deserved a chance as well as ourselves, then we got up the fowl coop on to the rail, now blistering and with paint sticking to our knees as we also clambered up.

"Ready, Davis?"

"Right, Jack."

"One—two—three!"

At the word three we made the leap with the fowl-coop in front of us, holding tightly to the bars, and closing our eyes as we sank with a splash into the rolling waves.

We did not sink far, for the wooden cage to which we clung would not allow us, but for an instant we felt stunned with the shock of falling flat upon the sea—fortunately for us the height was not great, for the vessel had been gradually taking in water through the hole which the bolt had made, so that the fore part was now only a few feet from the surface, while the stern was still high.

As we once more opened our eyes, the ducks quacking and spluttering after their plunge, we could see the stern of the ship standing high and showing a great deal of her helm, while above spread the dark sails on the mizzen-mast, with the glow of the blazing portion behind.

She was driving along now at the rate of about four knots, with the violet-coloured thunder-clouds away in front, from which came at intervals lurid blue forked flashes, while low, distant rumblings could be heard over the hissing and sputtering of the falling embers.

The waves being rough but warm, we danced up and down without much discomfort in the trough of the sea, now beholding nothing but seething waters, now on the crest of a billow, with that ship becoming more sharply defined as she receded, and the growing flames at her bows. As we gazed again, we beheld a black hull and sails, surrounded by an orange

cloud, with brown columns of clouds rising from its midst and floating over our heads in dense masses, through which we could not see the stars.

We could see sharp patches where the flames were getting higher, now curling at times as if to encircle the sails, which had not yet caught; then, while we were still looking from our crest-billow, we went down once more into the darkness of the hollow, and lost it.

We were rising again when the report of the exploding powder-cargo fell upon our ears like the blasting of a hundred mines, while high into the air flew myriads of sparkles like sky-rockets, giving off sharp reports as the cartridges burst here, there, and everywhere, whilst still rising up—up, as if they would never pause in their ascent, until they reached the stars twinkling mistily through those yielding smoke-clouds.

When we rose to the next billow the scene was nearly over: a dark, irregular, jagged line low-lying on the waves, and the burning furnace inside, without any longer the power to move, was all that met our gaze.

From those torn sides where the cross ribs stood out so blackly leapt yellow flames, and vermilion sparks were exploding and scattering as they rose with that deep crimson pall, while over the sea on every side floated backwards countless pieces of burning cartridge-paper and glowing match-wood.

Then we sank once more, and before we could rise again the *Black Corbie* had finished her career; and save for those dull red sparks and scattering clouds of steam and smoke, darkness reigned around.

* * * * *

We could not have been more than two hours

floating, when we were rescued by the boats of the *Flying Fox*, an Aberdeen clipper, taking out emigrants to Queensland. Before the *Black Corbie* went down, we had sighted ships of all sorts almost every day, as we were now on the direct ocean route of ships going to all parts, to or from England, so that it was almost impossible to drift long without being seen by some vessel or other.

It was just daybreak when the *Flying Fox* came up to the scene of the disaster; she had seen the lurid glow on the horizon during the night, and all knew what that meant.

The long-boat and dingey had not been seen, but our boat with Jabez had been hailed about an hour before they picked us up. We learnt that Jabez had reported he was the last to leave the ship; indeed, he spun a yarn so very romantic that the sailors had doubted it, looking with unprejudiced eyes on the general appearance of the narrator, and so decided to hang about until daylight, in the hope of picking up some other survivors.

The hang-dog expressions of malice and disappointment on the face of Jabez were not unnoticed, as he saw us drawn with our duck-coop over the side—the inmates of which, by the way, were found to be all alive, as were also the hens and gallant cock. About half an hour afterwards, when daylight broke and permitted them to examine the surface of the ocean, there were no signs of Captain Coffin or his men, although the *Flying Fox* hung about for half a day looking after them; they must have been picked up by some other vessel the chief mate at last declared, and so entering the fact in his log-book, sailed away on his long, distant voyage. Jabez for one hour had

been as much a hero as he ever was likely to be in this world, when our most untimely appearance on the duck-coop put a sudden dash to all his hopes and exposed his lies.

We had no need to contradict his stories by a word, our appearance did that too definitely, so without finishing the tale of heroism which he was relating to the cabin-passengers he skulked along to the steerage, where, finding the berth which had been apportioned to him, we saw him no more that day.

The *Flying Fox* had left England about two weeks before she rescued us, with a full complement of emigrants bound for Queensland, Brisbane, Rockhampton and Bowen; about thirty single young men, a dozen of married couples with their children, and about two hundred single girls going out after situations, and if possible, husbands.

In the first and second cabins they carried a few passengers, but the chief accommodation was for steerage passengers.

Going down the Channel and through the Bay of Biscay they had experienced very rough weather, which had laid them all down with sea-sickness, that is all the passengers, with the Government-appointed doctor and matron. They had also lost their bowsprit; and one young man, who had been appointed from the steerage as doctor's assistant, had fallen overboard while attempting to draw water to wash with, just before getting through the Bay, and as the vessel was heading before the gale they could not stop to pick him up, so that they actually saw the poor fellow go under without having the power to save him.

This had thrown a gloom over the company for some days; but now that fair weather was setting in

and the qualms of sea-sickness were leaving even the most sensitive, they were beginning to appear on deck and preparing to enjoy themselves.

Dr. Allan Sleigher was the medical attendant appointed by Government to wait upon the passengers, and who had come up on deck to get an early sniff of air and an appetite for breakfast. At the moment we were hauled over the side, hen-coop and all, in his professional capacity he came over to examine us, and while he did so I thought, from his costume and the amount of gold braid and gilt buttons upon his cap and jacket, that he must be a very high sea-dignitary indeed, for I had never seen any one so bedizened unless in coloured pictures of admirals and commodores.

I regarded him with great awe for a time, in spite of his cheeks, yellow with the recent sea-sickness, and still uncertain landsman's legs, and was very happy indeed to hear that I was all right, even although I had felt this before he so wisely gave his verdict.

Dr. Sleigher was a tall man, but not very compactly slung together; he had flabby-looking cheeks, with black Dundreary-shaped side-whiskers attached, wavering lips, and black lack-lustre eyes, like pieces of slatey coal. He was flabbier-looking than usual owing to his sea-sickness that morning when we first met, and as this was his first appearance since the rough weather had sent him below, he was very soon the centre of a cluster of women, young and old, who were all at once pouring into his unwilling ears their countless complaints, to all of which he listened with the air of a suffering martyr.

The captain was not visible, nor had he been seen on deck since the first day that the vessel sailed; but

the chief mate, a short, wiry, pock-marked man, by name Lewis, did double duty. I noticed as I stood that some of the sailors and male passengers cast dark looks at the doctor when they passed him, and from their murmurs I soon gathered that the old man had been sent on the drink by the doctor, who kept him constantly plied and in a shameful state of intoxication.

After breakfast, for we had meanwhile been dried at the galley fire, a subscription list was set agoing amongst the passengers, the result of which was that Davis, Jabez, and myself were all set up in a change of clothes, and sufficient shirts and under-clothing to last us until we reached the Antipodes.

As Dr. Sleigher shambled away from his group of female patients, he tripped over a coil of rope, and calling to a sailor, who stood near holding on to a line, ordered him, in an imperious manner, to remove it; the sailor only shifted his quid of tobacco to the other cheek and spat overboard, but paid no further attention to the order.

"Mr. Griffin," cried out the doctor to the second mate, a tall, good-looking young fellow, with a light moustache and blue eyes, who was at that moment superintending the alteration of a yard.

Mr. Griffin looked at the doctor for a moment in silent contempt, but made no reply.

"Do you hear me, Mr. Griffin?"

"Well, Mr. Sleigher, if I do?"

"Dr. Sleigher, sir, if you please."

"Griffin is my name, and I hold a skipper's certificate. Could you tell me what kind of a one you carry?"

The doctor muttered something between his teeth, and walked away towards the companion-way.

"A belaying-pin might bring that lubber to his senses, if it didn't break his back," observed Mr. Griffin, as he looked after the doctor with a scowl on his sunburnt brow.

So I could see that it was not all straight sailing on board the *Flying Fox*, any more than it had been on the *Black Corbie*.

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It was now that I got the title of Johnny Ducks, which has stuck to me ever since. They used to address Davis and me as "Johnny Ducks and his friend;" I suppose from the fact that we had come aboard on the duck-coop.

For the first two or three days Davis and I had nothing else to do except wander about the ship, of which we had pretty well the run, as it was not a very easy matter to define our grade or the class we should by rights belong to. We slept, it is true, in the steerage, but at meal-times were to be found either in the forecastle with the men, or in the deck-house, where the purser, sailmaker, and boatswain had their quarters, while between whiles we were going all sorts of messages from the cabins to the officers, or from the girls' place amidships to the men's; for, now that the weather was getting fine, they appeared, one and all, to be possessed with a frantic fever for flirtation, all which, although we were willing enough to act as Mercuries when asked to run, still inspired our boyish hearts with supreme contempt for the pack of fools.

I have always had a great leaning towards animals of all kinds, and now I had plenty of opportunity to study out the peculiarities of the different pets on board. We discovered, besides the two cows,

pigs, and fowls, usually carried on board ships going a long voyage, that in the forecastle the men had a regular assortment. One had a tame hedgehog, another a Tunis monkey, while the sailmaker had brought from his last voyage a young pelican, who was a most inordinate eater, and caused great fun through his frantic endeavours to get through more than his fair share all at once, or his solemn deportment at other times.

They had also a dog on board, a full-grown kangaroo hound, besides a Persian black cat, and a cockatoo belonging to the fair-moustached second mate.

All day long, when we were not prowling about the decks, we would watch these different pets, and play with those who were of a playful turn.

The hedgehog would not play; he liked best to stay in the dark corners of the bunks, and bite in a sly way at the sailors' feet. The Tunis ape held him in mortal horror, and used to leap up with a shrill cry whenever she saw him come near to her master's shoulder, where, with one lank, red-haired paw round his neck, she would chatter, show her teeth, and wave her other arm, but watch him all the while in great fear.

The little black Persian puss was everywhere, with her great tail swinging about like an ostrich feather, and her bright little yellow eyes; they always knew when a change of weather might be expected by her motions, for she was like an evil elf at these times, leaping up from skylight to shrouds like a bird on the wing, but with such weird bounds that it looked more like a witch's incantation than anything else.

She endured the presence of Grip, the kangaroo hound, because he had been on board previous to her arrival; but the little innocent Sancho was her

mortal enemy, never missing a chance to fly and tear the spaniel pup, while he only whimpered and rolled over on his fat little glossy back, looking at her with wondering, sheepish eyes.

Grip, the kangaroo hound, was the thief of the ship; bloated from his depredations, and scarred over with knife-marks which the butcher had given him, he still came up boldly to the killing-house, with his last gash hardly healed, to see what he could snatch away.

This butcher, by name Hiram Coster, was the one on board whom I regarded with the greatest amount of aversion, blended with fear. A gigantic Irish-American, he spoke with a strong Yankee drawl, guessed and calculated on all subjects, and garnished every second word with some revolting or blood-curdling word; he seemed born to the bloody calling that he had chosen.

On the second morning of our coming aboard we found him stumping about the deck, cursing horridly. It appears that he had run a rusty nail into his thumb while the ship was in port, the result of which was a whitlow, that was torturing him by day and preventing him sleeping at night.

As he had insulted Dr. Sleigher on the first day, he refused his advice; so that now Hiram was calling down all the anathemas upon his devoted head, and blasting the separate parts of his anatomy, particularly his medical eyes, as he tore backwards and forwards in front of his killing-house, with a sheep lying ready for the knife beside the block, mingling its plaintive bleatings with his blasphemous howlings.

"Have some patience, mate," said the boatswain, as he passed; "it'll be all right in a day or two."

"A day or two! D'ye think I'm agwine to stand this for a day or two?"

"What else can you do?"

"Rip that sham doctor up, or—or—this——"

He had been glaring round for something to put his vengeance out on; so we shrank as far as we could out of sight, when his eye landed upon the block with the chopper across it.

What would he do next? We thought that his bloodshot eyes looked in our direction, as he seized up the chopper with a sudden savage resolution, and we prepared to fly; but it was not us, for, unrolling the bandages from his swollen thumb, he laid it deliberately upon the block, and, with one deft stroke of the chopper, it was lying severed from the hand; after which, with a hoarse chuckle, he proceeded to roll the bandages round the stump.

"There, that thumb won't trouble me no more! Here, youngster, take that bit of beef to the doctor, and tell him I want an extra glass of grog."

He chucked the bleeding thumb towards where I stood, and sat down calmly upon the block, with his feet resting on the prostrate body of the bleating sheep, to wait my return from the cabin.

The doctor, unwilling at any time to move from his cabin, came at this case, and bound up the maimed hand; but refused the order for grog, which brought upon him a fresh outburst from Hiram, to which he only retorted that he would report his insolence at head-quarters.

"I guess that eer Sawbones is agwine to make a mess of this craft, if he ain't stopped in time; he has got Griffin into disgrace in the cabin already with the old man."

"Don't fret," replied the boatswain; "he won't be let go too far," as he walked away to pipe up his watch.

By degrees we fell into billets on board. Jabez was installed into the first mate's watch, doing duty before the mast, and skulking about when he could. Davis had chosen to assist the cook at the galley; so that I seldom saw the colour of his face for pan-grease and smut, as he ran about all day washing up dishes, or carrying things either to the cabin, forecastle, or different steerage messes—a hard enough life; but he liked it, and went singing and whistling, instead of sulking, like Jabez, who was for ever fancying himself put-upon and ill-used, with a true sailor's grumble over everything, without a sailor's readiness for work or disregard to danger.

From the morning I had gone in search of the doctor for Hiram, I gradually seemed to drift into the post of doctor's boy, until at last, being of an indolent disposition, he had installed me formally into his dispensary (amidships, where the married couples were), seldom going there himself, but describing what he wanted, while he himself lay reading novels all day long on his bunk, or kept tempting the captain to drink.

I saw the captain often now, but never in a state for duty; he also lay all day in his cabin, getting, as medicine from the doctor, pure brandy or champagne and brandy mixed; while all the responsibility and duty seemed to rest upon Mr. Lewis, who never grumbled, but went about his duty quietly and firmly.

Mr. Griffin, at this time, had been ordered by the half-imbecile captain not to sit down at the saloon-table until he had apologized to the doctor for refusing

to obey him on that morning; so that he now lived in the deck-house, with the boatswain, vowing vengeance on the doctor, but going about his duty as usual.

Every morning I had to go round the different bunks, to see the state of health on board, and report the complaints and wants. The first visit the doctor showed me what to do, after which he left the matter entirely in my hands, troubling himself no further in the matter; he evidently regarded the emigrants, male and female, as a pack of beasts, altogether unworthy his own personal supervision.

After I had made my round, I had to report in the cabin, and get his instructions; and on these occasions I saw that whatever his intentions might be, he took every chance to abuse Mr. Griffin, poisoning the captain's mind against the young mate, until he raved like a madman, and fell back, overcome with his passion and the brandy.

A kindly-faced old man the skipper looked, and venerated by all the men, in spite of his present relapse, for which they only blamed the doctor in the deck-house. I heard many plans discussed to get the captain away from the evil influence; but, held by the veneration which a ship's captain ever inspires in his men, these plans were generally only discussed, but never came to any action, except the dark glances and threatening murmurs which ever greeted the hated usurper whenever he appeared.

Mr. Lewis was the only man who ever spoke to him pleasantly; for, both in saloon and steerage, he was regarded with disfavour.

For a few days I wondered why the doctor and Mr. Griffin were enemies, but at last I found out the reason.

Amongst the lady passengers was one young Welsh lady, going out to join her father in Queensland, who was a large squatter on the Darling Downs.

This young lady I used to meet with Mr. Griffin during the evenings on deck, leaning against the rail and looking to seaward, while he leaned in an easy style, with his legs crossed, beside her, all the time he should be sleeping.

On these occasions the doctor always made a point of coming up and ordering her below; for it appeared that she had been placed under the charge of the captain, who, with a great many of his other duties, had relinquished this charge to his evil adviser.

It did not take me long, boy though I was, to see how the wind lay. Marie Trefusis liked to spend her evenings beside Mr. Griffin, while the doctor tried his hardest to separate them, and take the position which she had chosen the second mate to fill. He was too indolent and selfish to take much trouble to gain the good opinion of the young lady, although he used to sit beside her at table, and walk with her as often as he could manage to drag himself on deck; but he seemed to grow more lively, and shake half of his laziness away, when he saw a chance of spoiling their pleasure. He seemed to be one of those sluggish natures who could take no trouble to oblige or serve a friend, or render himself in any way agreeable, but who always seem to have the right word handy to disparage the absent, and who cling with undying tenacity to their hatreds.

I had a difficult task before me in my goings to and fro; for when I went to the doctor's cabin, he would put me through all sorts of questions as to what they were saying and doing in the other parts of the ship,

and regard me with sourness when I evaded these queries. Also in the deck-house it was the same; the butcher, who was still on the sick-list, used to order me to report all about the doctor, and drive me into corners with his brutality, until Mr. Griffin came to my rescue with—

"Leave be, Hiram. Can't you see that the boy isn't made of the Paul Pry stuff? Leave be; if he won't tell on them, he'll be the truer to us."

The mate had a reason for trusting me; for many a stolen interview I managed to get for him and Miss Trefusis, which they would not otherwise have had but for me.

Of all the nasty jobs deputed to me, the worst was that of going through the single women's quarters of a morning.

There were one or two nice girls amongst them, who tried to keep up the credit of their sex; but these were exceptions amongst the two hundred, who seemed to vie with one another to make the poor old matron unhappy.

The generality were young servants who only cared for ease, and thought to get it by coming out to a new country, with a big sprinkling of women who had long lost all sense of shame or womanhood.

Scattered amongst the stainless majority, these abandoned sprinkling very soon contaminated the rest, making them reckless and defiant of authority, so that when I went amongst them it was only to hear worse language than even I heard in the forecastle.

One of the rules, which the doctor should have seen enforced, was to have them all on deck at a certain hour for exercise; this duty he calmly handed over to me.

With the fourth mate and two of the sailors I went each morning at the hour appointed to listen to the complaints of the night, and clear out the women from their sleeping-quarters, and a wild half-hour we had before we could enforce the rule.

The orderly few were up and dressed, waiting on the doors being unlocked to go on deck; these we let out first, then entered amidst wild jeers and mocking bursts of laughter from the refractory.

Those who were up, we hustled out fighting with them as we would with wild beasts; some who would not rise and gave no reason for staying in bed, we douched with buckets of salt water carried for that purpose by the seamen—a duty which they took great pleasure in carrying out to the letter, amid wild screams and indecent scufflings; some who pleaded illness I had to go through the pretence of examining and afterwards explaining to the doctor the symptoms, after which he sent me down to the dispensary with directions how to proceed, but without ever troubling himself whether I mixed them up rightly or otherwise.

By this means I came in time to learn to look as wisely at a patient as if I knew all about his or her troubles, which I understand is one of the first qualities of a successful physician; I also soon learned that the doctor knew very little more than I did about his craft, having won by some fluke or other a St. Andrew's diploma, and that his system was comprehended in two mixtures for all troubles, one to soothe, in which opium is largely blended, and the other to purge.

With these recipes he had taken in hand the care of nearly three hundred bodies, for a space of about four and a half months.

After a visit or two round, I learnt to know exactly which mixture to administer, and rarely troubled the doctor, who seemed to like that best.

"Do what you think best, only don't bother me just now," he would say, looking up from his book, and I did, with sometimes not very satisfactory results to the patients.

However, they got to like me much better than they had done the doctor, particularly as they could wheedle out of me many little comforts, which they could never have got from Dr. Sleigher, such as half-bottles of wine to the nursing mothers, or condensed milk for the children.

For these extras I was compelled to make out a list and show to the doctor. Sometimes he looked over it and grumbled, striking out some items; at other times, when interested in his book, he would merely take his pencil and sign the order which I got from the purser, and distributed among the emigrants. When I had an extra list for wines, beef-tea, or milk, I used to choose my time, and so generally got what I wanted, and in consequence became a favourite.

"God bless his purty girl's face and yeller hair," the Irish element would cry when I came down amongst them. "Here he comes, like the blessed sunshine. Now, Barney, sure and he's the bhoy to get ye that port wine for your racking cough."

And Barney generally got his port wine after that.

Meantime things were going from bad to worse with Mr. Griffin and the doctor. On one occasion we had two days' spell of bad weather and all hands were required on deck; when the hatches were battened down, the men openly grumbled, and demanded that

the skipper should appear, or they would strike work and let the ship go to the gale.

Mr. Lewis went aft and tried to rouse the captain to his duty; but between the mate's departure and the captain's dressing, the doctor had been busy telling him that it was a threatened mutiny, and that Mr. Griffin was the ring-leader.

A douche of cold water and a strong pick-me-up brought the dazed mind of Captain James to comprehend the state of matters as represented by Dr. Sleigher, so that he appeared amongst his discontented crew and astonished passengers with a ghastly face and the glaring eyes of a drink maniac, grasping in his hands a brace of double-barrelled pistols.

Led on by the doctor, he stumbled down the poop-ladder, and staggered on to the main-deck, where the men were assembled with Mr. Lewis and the other mates.

For a moment he drew himself up and looked at his men savagely, who, in spite of his disturbed appearance, hung their heads like sheepish school-boys.

"Boatswain, are all the men here?"

"Yes, sir!" replied the boatswain, touching his forehead respectfully.

"Who is it that refuses to work?"

No reply.

After a pause, during which the captain stood master of the position, Mr. Griffin stepped forward and touched his cap. "Captain James, the men desire me—"

"Ha! so you are at the head of this plot, are you?" yelled the captain, springing over to where his mate stood respectfully but upright.

They looked at one another for a moment, the young

man with a glance of affectionate reproach, and the captain with a ferocious glare; the latter slowly raised his pistol, and placing it against the head of the other, was just about to press the trigger, when one of the passengers dashing forward threw up the arm, the pistol exploding at the same instant.

What astonished me was that neither the mate nor any of the seamen offered to resist this mad action of the captain.

"Good God, Captain James, what are you about to do?" cried out the passengers, clustering about him and taking the weapons from his unresisting hands. The passion seemed to have died out of him, for he only looked about him in a dull way, without seeming to recollect where he was.

"Let the old man alone," said Mr. Griffin at this point. "If he likes to amuse himself shooting, why not, isn't he the master?"

The sound of the mate's voice seemed to rouse up the ire of the old man once more, for he began struggling with the passenger who, seeing him now unarmed, let him go.

"Who dare hinder me on board this ship! Here, boatswain, clap these men in irons; and as for you, you scoundrel, will you apologize at once to the doctor?"

"To you, sir, with all my heart," replied the mate; "but to that hound, no, sir! I'll see him hanged first."

"Then take that, and consider yourself under arrest for the remainder of the voyage."

The captain dashed his clenched fist full in the face of the second mate, who only lifted his hand to wipe away the blood.

"Thank you, sir."

"Boatswain, the irons!"

The boatswain went into the house and brought out a pair of handcuffs.

"Hold out your hands, Mr. Griffin."

"Yes, sir."

After he was handcuffed and locked, the captain handed the key to the doctor (who received it with a snigger), saying,—

"Look after the prisoner, Dr. Sleigher. Boatswain, take him into the deck-house, and see that he is kept there."

Looking round the crew, he continued, "Now is there any other man wants to speak to me?"

No reply from those downcast faces.

"Then let me have no more grumbling. Come, doctor."

The doctor led off his victim with a gratified smile upon his flabby face.

"All right," said the mate, putting up both hands to wipe his smudged face, amidst the loud murmurings of the passengers. "The doctor will pay up for that blow before we reach Brisbane."

He stalked into the deck-house, the boatswain following at his heels, while the passengers made a silent lane for the doctor and staggering captain; the ladies particularly drawing aside their skirts with gestures of contempt as the pair passed them.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME OF THE FLYING FOXITES, WITH A MUTINY BREWING.

THE worst and most dangerous amongst the single women was called Beauty Burt. She was a married woman, going out to join her husband in Brisbane, but who had taken passage as a single female.

Thin and good-looking, with jet black hair, wicked blue eyes, and swarthy skin, yet with richly-coloured cheeks and thin scarlet lips.

She gave the matron no end of anxiety and trouble, instigating insurrection, polluting the minds of the less vicious with vile stories and jests, and continually breaking out of her quarters during the night.

She had several admirers on board, both in the forecastle and amidships, and kept things lively there; the men continually quarrelling amongst themselves over her, while she sported about with wicked contentment, getting presents of food and extra comfort from passengers, officers, and men, and flaunting her brazen face with impunity everywhere.

Amongst her admirers the most ferocious was the butcher; and the one she appeared to favour most was a half-caste Portuguese and African sailor, lithe and handsome as an Apollo, with the strength of a Samson in his well-knitted figure, and the wickedness of a devil surging in every drop of hot blood under that golden-ruddy skin.

Beauty and this Zeno Valdez were most often to be met on starlight nights sitting amongst the ropes in the fore-deck, while the rest of the girls were supposed to be safely locked below.

Some of the married men had been enrolled as special constables, to enforce order on board; but this young woman and some of her companions generally managed to evade their vigilance.

Amongst the respectable set, I used to notice one pale-faced, silent young woman, with large, dark, melancholy eyes, who would sit half the day looking seaward, but speaking to no one.

I heard that she had been brought on board when the ship was lying in the stream, the night before she sailed, in a small boat, by two young gentlemen who said they were her brothers. The doctor had received them, as by prior arrangement, getting the men to hoist her over the side, as she appeared to be asleep or senseless; after which the brothers had rowed away, without leaving any luggage for her or coming aboard.

The matron considered her a girl with a mystery; for she had slept for more than thirty hours after boarding, and only woke up when they were going down the Channel. She asked no questions when she woke up, and had not taken up with any one since.

This silent figure, in her black merino dress, always depressed me when I looked at her. She was always obedient; came out at the hour appointed, and went below when the time came to be locked up; she never asked for either medicine or any other fare than the fare allowed.

The matron got up a subscription-list for her for under-clothing, as they had done for us, seeing that

she had no change; and only when she handed her the garments did the girl display any emotion. Then she flushed scarlet, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed as if her heart would break. However, after a bit she seemed to crush down the feelings again, and, with the same white, pitiful but self-contained expression, thanked her benefactress and retired with her gifts.

Whatever her history or mystery, she made no confidants, and the other women did not offer to penetrate through her reserve; even her berth-mates united to leave her alone.

There were four of us besides myself in the cabin, or rather bunk-hutch, where I slept, in the single men's portion of the ship. Two young men confided to us that they were by profession pickpockets and housebreakers from Liverpool, going out to a new country, because the old one had become too hot, and taking out their swag with them.

They were both most accomplished young fellows, dapper and dashing, who could sing, dance a jig, or tell a good story, and they both charmed me with their engaging manners. Harry Mather and George Ringold were the names they passed under, and they used to while away the evenings with relating their adventures and narrow escapes; and so delightful were their experiences that they reminded me of Dick Turpin, Claude Duval, and George Barrington so much, that I had some thoughts of making one of a gang which they thought of organizing when they got ashore in Queensland.

They did not do me much harm, not having the chance, although they might have done so, those gallant robbers; but they taught me many tricks—how to evade pickpockets, where to conceal money so that it

might not be suspected, which have stood me in good stead in many strange places since. Brave boys! They landed in Brisbane, luring astray three of the young men from that *Flying Fox* to join their gang. They made a colonial reputation for themselves, which I may hereafter relate, but they are now employed in making Government roads, with a life engagement each.

The other two were twin-brothers, who had the most perfect affinity that I ever saw displayed in two separate bodies. They simultaneously thought upon the same subject, and spoke the same words; and at night dreamt the same dreams, which we had lots of chances of proving, as they spoke aloud in their sleep.

According to the arrangement of the ship, our quarters were in the fore between-decks; that is, a false double-deck had been placed over the cargo, and subdivided into divisions. In the single men's places each division had six bunks, three on either side, with no door. These partitions were about a couple of feet from the roof, so that all along the ship's side to the aft part was open; therefore, it was left to the honour of the people whether they kept to their own quarters or not.

Amidships the married people lay in the same way, only that they had fewer bunks in their department; each couple with their young children occupying a separate apartment, likewise open and doorless.

This divisioning of the hold must have been suggested by cattle-pens, to which they more closely approached than anything else, as there was no privacy or consideration shown for delicate-minded people; they were expected to herd together, and shut their eyes to the doings of one another.

The single girls' place was partitioned to the ceiling, and the married people's next ; so that they could not get through that way, although they could both see and be seen, as the skirting-boards were carelessly put up and open at the seams.

Amongst the married people who flattered me the most, and, in consequence, thereby got the most out of me, was a miner from Durham with a young wife and baby.

He was a little white-faced man, with crow-like eyes, and a deformed figure ; she was rosy-cheeked and country-like, with fair, abundant hair, about which she was not very tidy, but allowed it to hang like a tangled mane, carelessly wisped ; the baby was puny and neglected-looking.

This young woman used to hang about the dispensary door all the time I was in there, with her dirty-faced baby in her arms, flattering me with a silky voice, and picking up little things which she thought she would like. I never felt very comfortable with her, partly because she engrossed so much of my time, and partly because she took too much away with her—in little quantities, certainly ; but, like the many visits of the ant, hers were thinning out the stock imperceptibly, and I had to account for it.

I did not like her or the baby, and would rather have been left alone ; I used to think upon that tangled mass of disorderly hair, and seemed to see it rubbing loosely against the doorway when she was not there. In fact, so often had it rested there that I could see its grease-stain upon the unpainted wood, and, a little lower down, the stamp of her dirty left shoulder, which she used to press against it while she loafed, with the baby on her arm.

Her husband never came to disturb us during these long conversations; he was generally to be seen on deck smoking, or lying below looking vacantly at the ceiling.

One morning Mrs. Moore (which was her name) came to the door as usual, and said,—

"Would you do me a favour, Johnny?"

"Yes, if I can," I replied.

"Oh, you can easily, for you are such a lovely writer."

"Is it to do some writing?"

"Yes, Johnny; I want a character or two for my husband."

"But how can a boy like me give him a character?"

"This way, Johnny, my dear. You can write him out a good character, as if you were the minister of our parish, and I'll tell you the name to sign."

"But will that be right, Mrs. Moore?"

"Oh, yes; because the minister said he would give us one before we left, only that we were in too great a hurry to wait for it."

"Very well, Mrs. Moore." I did not fancy the job, but did not like to refuse either. If she had gone away for a moment, or only had the dirty white-faced baby with her, it might have strengthened me to say "No;" but she was here alone, with her soft voice and the thick cluster of fair hair touching my downless cheek, and so gave me no time to think it out.

"There, you pretty boy, is a good pen and ink and three sheets of paper. Drive ahead, and don't be a little fool; I'll tell you what to say."

For a while we puzzled over these compositions, for she was not very fertile in words, and I was not very willing. However, at last I managed three letters of

recommendation, which could only have deceived a sailor or an idiot, they were so bunglingly done, so wretchedly put together, and so badly spelt. Mrs. Moore gave me names to sign at the end, which I did, and then she left me saying I was a darling good boy, which saying I doubted very much, as I went all that day with a heavy load at my heart that did not feel like the reward of virtue.

One of the letters, supposed to be from the clergyman, set forth in wretched orthography and schoolboy caligraphy, that James Moore had been a member of his church for eight years, a constant and earnest worshipper, who had given him every satisfaction; the others were from employers of the said James Moore, who also expressed themselves highly satisfied with his habits of industry and honesty.

After this Mrs. Mary Moore let me have a greater amount of leisure, only coming when she required anything special from the dispensary, yet still flattering me up when we met, so that the sickening memories of her tawny tresses and those false letters began to fade from my mind; and I was becoming once again the adventurous boy, who could look straight out without the sneaking feeling being on me that I had while she used to haunt me, of shuffling along sideways and shifting my glances.

I could now once more go about watching the state of cabin and deck-house, female quarters and forecastle, and of a night play tricks along with Davis, with the careless freedom from thought and care which boyhood requires, to be able to enter thoroughly into mischief.

At this time I played a prank upon the doctor which won me great praise from deck-house, forecastle, and midships.

It chanced that one of the married women had come on board with a fortnight-old baby; both mother and baby had been on the sick-list since sailing, so that even Dr. Sleigher was compelled to sign for wine constantly, although the quality which he ordered was of the very cheapest brand.

One morning, besides the list which I had made out, he added another order for a bottle of the best brand on board; it was the birthday of Miss Marie Trefusis, and the doctor was looking, for him, most uncommonly spry and jovial.

"Fetch both bottles up to me and see that you handle the special one carefully; don't shake off the cobwebs."

I got the two bottles and carried them aft to his cabin, one clean with a brand new yellow seal, and the other dingy and smothered in dust.

The doctor always kept a few empty bottles about his cabin, old brandy and champagne empties, and I knew it was his custom, when sending down wine to steerage passengers, to make two bottles out of every one, dividing them equally and filling them up from his water-jug.

On this morning he prepared to go through the customary performance; first of all laying the dusty one very carefully down on his bunk, so that it mightn't roll off.

Whether he had been drinking too hard with the captain over-night, or was nervous from some other cause, I know not; but no sooner had he drawn the cork from the new bottle than it slipped from his hands and smashed to pieces on the floor.

"Quick, boy, my sponge and basin." I brought the sponge still moist from use, with the basin to which the soap-suds still clung, while he stooped down and

mopped up the ruddy fluid from the dirty floor, squeezing it into the basin which I held.

When he had mopped it all up, he poured the mucky wine into his water-jug, and taking an empty brandy bottle filled it up with the mixture from the jug; then corking it carefully, he said,—

"Take that down to Mrs. Kemp"—the delicate mother—"and this one hand in to Miss Trefusis' berth as you pass, with this card."

He handed me the two bottles, with his visiting card on which was pencilled—"To Miss Trefusis, with Dr. Sleigher's best wishes."

"Take care you don't make any mistake in the bottles, the dusty one is for Miss Trefusis."

"All right, sir," I replied, as I went out of his cabin door.

All boys, who are not born blue, are decided democrats, as all girls by nature love lords. No sooner was I outside that cabin door, than justice appealed to me and won her cause over strict rectitude. Miss Trefusis is young and strong, so does not require good wine; Mrs. Kemp is delicate and ought to have it. As to whether the stingy doctor liked it or not, gave me very little concern.

I knocked at the young lady's door as I passed, which she opened and looked out with a smile, when she saw who it was.

The dusty bottle was under my jacket; the other I handed to her with the card, which she tossed from her with disdain.

"Set the bottle down there, Johnny, and wait a moment."

While I waited she scribbled a little note.

"Will you give that to Mr. Griffin?"

"Yes, miss."

"And tell the stewardess, if you see her, that I have a bottle of wine for her."

"All right, miss."

At the saloon door I saw the stewardess, to whom I delivered Miss Trefusis' message, with the addition,—

"I wouldn't advise you to drink that wine, Jane."

"Why not, Johnny?"

"Because the doctor spilt it on his floor, and wiped it up with his dirty sponge into his soapy basin."

"Oh, the beast."

Jane hurried off to inform Miss Trefusis about the insult, while I went down to the hold, and had the proud satisfaction of telling the joke and seeing the poor sick mother benefited by the good wine.

The whole ship, with the exception of the doctor and captain, heard about this transfer trick before night, and enjoyed it exceedingly; the stewardess keeping the bottle to show it about, after which the doctor stood without a single supporter.

In the deck-house Mr. Griffin fairly hugged me with his manacled arms, for he knew that his rival hadn't the ghost of a chance now, after this.

"Can you get the key of the irons for to-night, Johnny? I want them off for an hour."

"I'll try, Mr. Griffin," I replied.

"All right, my boy."

That night I managed to smuggle the key of the irons from the doctor's cabin during dinner-time, and liberated the mate, slipping it back again before it was missed.

Miss Trefusis left the table early, and shortly afterwards when the doctor followed, and was shambling

about the poop looking for her in the dark, he was felled with a belaying-pin, which was flung from the main-deck and caught him in the small of the back, doubling him up and confining him to his bed for a couple of days.

I did not see who had flung the pin, but as I was hurrying aft at the doctor's bellow, the boatswain darted out of the deck-house, and whispered,—

"Run quick to the cabin and fetch the key."

I was up and down again and back once more with the key before the doctor could pick himself up, for no one offered to assist him; and when shortly afterwards I met Miss Trefusis, as she appeared on the poop, apparently from her cabin, she squeezed my arm, and said, with a merry laugh,—

"You are a pretty boy, Johnny, and will be a fine fellow some day."

I liked that compliment much better from Miss Trefusis than the flatterings of Mrs. Mary Moore.

The captain next morning appeared once more on deck and questioned the men; but they were all able to prove a satisfactory alibi, and the mate being in irons no one could charge him with the assault.

We were now in the tropics and approaching the equator, so that great preparations were going on in the forecastle to welcome the coming aboard of Father Neptune and his merry court of Tritons.

At this time the purser made the discovery that two cases of brandy had been broached in the store-room and emptied, so that a close watch was placed upon the passengers, which resulted in the apprehension of honest James Moore, the Durham miner, who was the only man on board that appeared to be able to get tipsy when he liked.

A search being instituted, one whole bottle was discovered in his box, and one half emptied under his palliasse, so that there could be no longer any doubt as to his guilt.

Mrs. Mary Moore appeared before me on the morning of his capture with her pretty false eyes besmudged with tears, and her heavy coil of light hair more ruffled than ever. She had left the baby with a friend, so that she might manage me all the better.

"My darling boy," she said, placing her arms about me, and kissing me in spite of my struggles, "you have influence with the doctor, and you must go and beg my poor innocent Jamie off; it is all a mistake." I had heard the story from the purser and doubted the theory of the mistake; besides, as I struggled from those embracing arms, and felt the stickliness of those unwashed ragged sleeves, I grew disgusted, wondering how I culd ever have found any pleasure in her proximity. So, looking at her in that semi-obscurity, with the stuffiness of that tropic morning upon me, and the perspiration caused by that struggle, starting out in great beads from my brow, I said,—

"I shall do nothing of the sort, Mrs. Moore; for I know that he is the thief!"

"Won't you, Johnny?" she said, looking at me with an evil smile on her lips, the eyes dry enough now, though still stained round the sides with her dirty hands.

"No, I will not."

"And I suppose when I show the letters you wrote, that you will tell the doctor and captain that you did it?"

"Yes, if you dare to show them, Mrs. Moore!"

"Do you know what you will get if you do so?"

"What!"

"Transportation for life, my pretty young forger. My husband can only get a month or so for stealing, but forgery is a different matter!"

I grasped hold of the dispensary bench and panted with horror, "Forgery!"

"Yes, my boy, you thought you were doing nicely when you wrote those letters, didn't you?"

"I did it to oblige you, Mrs. Moore!"

"Then learn to hold your tongue to oblige me now, or I'll split upon you, for you are in the same boat as we are, and we have all got to sink or swim together whether you like it or not. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I faltered, feeling all at once the joyousness of life go out of me, and for the first time like a wretched slave and coward.

"Now, hand me that bottle of condensed milk. I must have a cup of good tea to support me before I go with your letters to the doctor!"

I gave her the bottle of milk without a word; on which she left me alone to my musing and shame, with all the laughing good-nature completely banished from her face, and only the expression of a virago in its stead.

As she went, those two grease-stains on the doorway caught my eyes, the stamps of her tresses and left shoulder-blade, and at the sight I grew sick and faint.

The doctor was now once more on his feet, and entered the dispensary shortly after the departure of Mrs. Moore. He asked me about the milk, and I was mean enough to tell him that I had given it to the children. What a sneak I felt as I uttered this shabby lie, for although all lies are bad, some seem to stick

and look dirtier than others, and this felt one of the nastiest which I had ever given utterance to, for it reduced me to the level of a thief as well as a sneak, the same as if I had stolen the milk from those poor little children, to give to that greedy, low woman.

Dr. Sleigher growled and grumbled about the extravagance, while he was busy making up a large black draught in a pail. I had melted the salts and infused the senna-leaves for this mixture the night before, it being the rule to give a black draught to all on board when the ship entered the tropics, and this was the day appointed to administer the grand general dose.

The doctor was dressed for the temperature in spotless linen, while I had only my shirt and trousers on, so after we had completed our mixture, I followed after him with the pail and a pannikin to the main-deck, where the passengers and crew were assembled waiting upon our coming.

When we got on deck, we discovered that the purser had also made a capture of Beauty Burt, in whose bunk the matron had found a couple of bottles of the stolen brandy.

James Moore sat ironed at the door of the deck-house in a most dejected attitude, with his wife on one side, all tear-bedimmed once more; while on the other stood Beauty, with a bold smile of impudent defiance on her handsome gipsy features, playing and twisting the handcuffs about her slender wrists, while round them were ranged the special constables, to which body the male prisoner had belonged, and not far off stood the butcher, with the favoured half-caste sailor looking on with lowering brows.

When the doctor saw the prisoners, he changed

colour, and stepping quickly over to the purser, said, "What is this, purser? what do you mean by making a prisoner of this—this woman?"

Beauty showed her white teeth, and palpably winked over in the direction of Zeno Valdez, who smiled and nodded back again. Dr. Sleigher looked troubled as the purser told his story, and produced the bottles.

"There must be some mistake here, purser, these cannot be the same bottles which were taken from the cases!"

"Of course, doctor, it's all a mistake of that wretch. Don't you remember giving me an order for brandy for my chest?" said Beauty, with a coarse laugh.

"Yes, purser, that is it; let Miss Burt go at once!"

"But, doctor, this is a fresh brand which I had not touched?" began the purser.

"Nonsense, nonsense, let Miss Burt go at once!"

The boatswain stepped forward and unlocked the handcuffs in grim silence, after which Beauty sauntered over to where her two admirers stood, without even so much as thanking the doctor for his kindness, the sailors and male passengers looking at one another and sniggering amongst themselves.

"Now, my man," observed the doctor brusquely to the other prisoner, "what have you to say for yourself?"

James Moore looked up with his crow-like eyes and whimpered, while his wife with heavy sobs began to intercede.

"It's his first offence, doctor, which I am sure you will overlook. Read these letters, sir," she glanced sideways at me as she handed him the forgeries, "Read these, and you will see that my husband has borne a good character for years; and it is so hard, if he has

been foolish, that my future has to be blasted in a new country."

"Umph!" remarked the doctor as he took the letters and glanced over them, while I looked on the deck with burning cheeks like a discovered criminal.

"Umph! these do seem to be very fair testimonials, and it is a pity that you should go to the new country with this disgrace. Well, I'll speak to the captain and see what can be done."

"Thank you, you dear, good man," replied Mrs. Moore with great fervour, as she took the letters back and put them into the bosom of her ragged dress. "Then will you give my husband into my charge till he is forgiven?"

"Yes, yes, you may take him with you. Boatswain, unlock his irons?"

James Moore skulked away with his affectionate wife, and as they passed me, she whispered,—

"Thank you also, Johnny; Jamie will speak to you by-and-by!"

I shivered but didn't look up as the doctor prepared to give out the black draught.

Only the saloon passengers were excused from partaking of that pannikin; they were supposed to take medicine a little more refined, to suit the station of life to which they had been chosen.

The young women had the first taste, and Beauty, out of gratitude for her deliverance, led the van, holding her pert nose with a thin finger and thumb, while she gulped down the abominable draught, and then with a gurgle of disgust walked away over to the shadow of one of the boats, and sank down, making a wry face.

"That's over, thank goodness!"

The two hundred followed, while I stood at the pail,

dipping in the pannikin as the doctor ordered, and filling his medical glass to the measure, as one after another gulped it down and staggered off to find seats where they could in the shadow.

A scene was this which ought to have rejoiced my young heart, and would have done so had it not been for that consciousness of guilt that oppressed me.

A burning sun overhead, which cast only shadows directly below, the pitch oozing and bubbling in the seams, and these emigrants laughing at the one who had the glass to take, the doctor standing imposingly beside me in that snowy suit with gilt buttons and braid glistening all over him!

That one glass did for all—girls, wives, husbands and children; without wiping and washing as each one emptied it, I filled it again from the pail.

The children gave us most trouble, they were brought up kicking and howling, and had to get their mouths held open and kept shut afterwards with their heads back, before they would swallow.

Jabez came on with his watch, and took his much in the same way as he did everything else. I had not seen much of him, since our occupations lay in such different grooves, and he was not allowed to interfere with me, for all the sailors were my warm friends.

"Here, doctor," shouted the butcher, pushing along the Kangaroo hound, "give this villain his fair share, he stole a leg of mutton this morning, and I guess it can't agree with him!"

Dr. Sleigher looked with haughty silence at this sally, but the boatswain cried, "Hold hard, mate, human beings fust; I wants my pelican dosed as well as your dog, for he has had an attack of indisgestion these two days past; but human beings fust!"

Davis was brought forward nearly the last, he had tried to hide amongst the pots and pans, but the old hunchback cook betrayed him, and helped to drag him out to the light.

I never could comprehend Davis disgracing himself on this occasion, but though he was as brave as a lion in ordinary times, he could not be made to take medicine.

He howled worse than the youngest child, and kicked and tore like a wild cat to get away, until at last two of the sailors laid him down spread-eagle fashion on the deck, and held his arms and legs wide apart, while another came forward to fix his teeth open, now obstinately clenched.

"Get a chisel from the carpenter," said the doctor in a rage.

The chisel was brought and wedged into the side of the mouth.

"Now a filler!"

When the filler had been inserted, the doctor stooping over him, poured in the contents of the glass, which in spite of all Davis could do went into his mouth.

"Now hold him down and his mouth shut till he swallows it!"

The doctor stood over Davis watching until he drew in the next breath, while the sailor held his jaws tightly together. Was Davis to be beaten? I saw his face grow purple as he held in his breath; then, woe to the doctor's spotless robes, from the clenched teeth squirted out a thin black spray straight over his face, staining shirt-front and snowy trousers. Davis had conquered.

"Dirty little beast!" shouted the half-blinded

dignitary amidst the uproarious laughter of those assembled, as he gave Davis a kick and staggered away, overcome with the nausea of his own mixture.

Now followed a wild scene, in which I almost forgot that vile thing, James Moore and his viler wife.

Davis rose with the tears in his eyes, and made in his rage after the doctor, until the sailors held him back.

"Enough, youngster; you'll have a turn at that lubber by-and-by!"

Then the butcher brought up his dog, Grip, with a gaping wound still upon his purple coat from his last encounter in the killing-house.

He was not a beauty, this debased dog in his obesity, with the tokens of a hundred convictions upon him, an ear half lopped away, and a hide corrugated like the shoulders of a full-grown aboriginal.

He ate more than any two men on board, and his food was always stolen either from the galley, the fowl-coops or the killing-shed, and so boldly yet cunningly did he go to work and evade capture even on board ship, that he was never known to have relinquished his prey, even although caught nearly always in the act; he bolted his stolen meat while dodging the flying knives or articles pitched after him, and only allowed his pursuers to come up to him while finishing the last mouthful.

"If ever dog or man needed physic, this yere beast is the one," observed the butcher, "give him a full pannikin, Johnny Ducks?"

"He took the best roast fowl yesterday off the plate just as I had dished it for the cabin!" said the cook.

"Then that must have been just close on the head

of a string of sausages six yards long if it was an inch," answered the butcher; "I just got sight of the last six inches going out the door!"

"This morning," said Jabez, "I saw him nick a drake's head off, when the door was left up a moment, and go off with the body, leaving the head behind!"

"What! and he had the impudence to reach up and take the hind leg of a sheep off the nail, and bolt with it hook and all! What a belly he has to be sure!"

"Ah! here is the hook," said Davis "he brought it to the galley as a return present for the fowl that he stole yesterday!"

Grip stood with drooping chops, listening to these accusations, with a true hang-dog expression, his little grey-yellow eyes twinkling watchfully from out the dove-tinted wrinkles of his skin, from an early and inordinate use of mercury during his youthful troubles of mange; his hide had gained this uncommon colour.

Without more ado, the burly butcher flung himself upon the fat one's gorged carcase, and, forcing him to the deck, lifted up one flap of his overhanging jaws, and drawing back the lips, showed me the place to put in the filler, after which he held his mouth shut until he had gurgled the draught down.

"There, that's your dose, thief," said he, rising from his alarming seat and permitting the dog to waddle away, which he did ruefully licking his mouth, and much after the manner of a successful publican, who has had a public rebuke in his own bar.

"Now for the pelican."

The boatswain led his patient forward, holding on to the rope which was tied round his leg.

With the solemn stupidity of an undertaker, this native of the Torres Straits stalked forward, until he

stood in the centre of the group with upright head, as if enclosed in a stiff collar, and enormous beak, blinking and winking at the fiery sun, oblivious to all around.

When the dose was held out to him, he snapped at it suddenly, pannikin and all, without budging a feather; it was only when the pannikin had upset inside his capacious pocket, that he appeared to discover anything unusual in the taste, then with a lofty glance round on the audience, he ejected pannikin and contents, as Davis had done, full in the face of his master, after which, jerking himself free, he walked away with much dignity, but without any undue haste, towards his friends the ducks.

This settled the physic-giving for that day, for the monkey, seeing how her compeers had been treated, sprang up the shrouds, and now hung head downwards by her tail in a hitch of the line from the mizzen-top, swinging backwards and forwards in an intense state of excitement.

That evening they rehearsed their part of crossing the line, as they expected to be there about twelve o'clock on the following day. I was chosen to act in the capacity of Neptune's wife, and had a flaxen wig made from loose tow, which had a very pretty and fantastic appearance. By being one of the actors, I escaped from the penalties inflicted upon the other strangers on board, who had never been over the line before.

While we were rehearsing, I could not help noticing that Jabez looked at me with an extra malevolence in his glance, but put it down to ordinary jealousy that I should have been chosen for the part of Lady Neptune instead of him. I paid no heed to his evil glances, though when shortly afterwards he went out

alone into the dark, I concluded that this jealousy had sent him away to brood by himself, and thought no more about the ill-conditioned cub.

After the rehearsal, I went down to the cabin to get orders for the next morning before turning in for the night. As I passed along the poop, I saw a figure which I could have sworn was Jabez, sneak from the companion way and slide into the shadow of the mizzen-mast.

"Is that you, Jabez?" I called out. No reply, only the figure glided off, and pushing through the rail, dropped upon the main-deck and disappeared.

When I reached the doctor's cabin, he looked up from his book, and said, with a suddenness which almost took away my breath,—

"You are quite sure that you made no mistake about those two bottles of wine the other day, boy?"

"Quite sure, sir!" I replied, for I had made no mistake, so could answer that question with impunity.

"Very well, that will do."

Going past the steward's pantry, I met Jane leaning against the door, coquetting with the steward.

"See here, Johnny, if you don't look out you'll get into trouble through that friend of yours!"

"Which friend, Jane?"

"Well, you are a prime favourite, I know, on board, but this friend is Jabez Carter!"

"What about him?"

"I saw him sneak into the doctor's cabin unseen half an hour ago!"

"I thought it was him I saw come out!"

"Well I would rather be in your shoes than his in a few days after this, when the mate comes to hear about his spying about and poking his nose into places

where he isn't wanted, and there isn't much goes on in the cabin but what's known in the deck-house. Say, have you seen Miss Trefusis about?"

"No!"

"Well, you'll find her somewhere about the main deck with the mate, and don't forget to give them the warning that they had best separate as soon as possible to-night, I'll tell them about the dirty spy myself!"

I met the pair near the second cabin, and gave them my message, upon which Miss Trefusis bade the mate a hasty good-night and glided away.

All my sympathies were with Mr. Griffin, for he was a hearty young fellow, and a decided contrast to this supercilious, empty-headed, quack medicine-man.

After Miss Trefusis left us, he walked for a few paces with me without speaking, then rapidly wheeling round, darted suddenly behind one of the water-barrels, and dragged forward a figure who had been hiding there.

"What skulker have we here listening!" In spite of his manacled wrists he held firmly on to his prize, dragging him towards the deck-house.

"So it has been you these two nights eavesdropping!" he exclaimed, as the sullen features of Jabez were exposed in the light of the slush-lamp.

"I was sound asleep, sir!"

"Oh, you were, were you? well, let that help you to rouse up and not go seeking a bunk where you're not wanted!"

He kicked the young cur from him as he spoke, when he rolled from the light into the darkness.

"Shouldn't wonder but what that is the traitor we are looking after!" muttered he, "however, we'll soon find out."

I sought out my friend Davis, and told him, as we

lay on the deck, all about the trouble I was in over the letters, with the treachery of Jabez. After we had discussed the matter in all its bearings, Davis suddenly said,—

"I tell you what it is, Jack, these letters must be stolen, or else you'll never have another free moment!"

"But how will it be managed, Davis?"

"Don't you fret, Jack, I'll do it for you!"

"Will you?" said that hoarse voice we knew so well, as Jabez crawled from behind a rope coil, and stooped over us, "Not if I can help it, my bully boys. I have you now, my fine doctor's boy, and will squeeze you a bit before I'm done with you. Just you sit where you are. I'm going to warn Jamie Moore to put those letters in a safe place, where you won't be able to steal them. Yah! I'll have you transported yet, you see if I don't!"

He grinned at me through the dim starlight with his face close to mine for a moment, and then, with a snap of his fingers, moved away, leaving Davis and me mutely staring at one another in consternation

CHAPTER V.

MUTINY ABOARD.

NEXT day we crossed the line, and Neptune held his impartial but strict court on board. It was about eleven o'clock that they heard his hoarse bellow hailing the ship from the sleeping deep, and then we all clambered over the sides and took our way to the platform raised for our reception, Neptune, with his pasteboard crown, flowing beard, and tin trident, while I represented Amphitrite, hiding my charms under an old print frock, lent for the occasion by one of the emigrants.

Behind our thrones stood the Barber and Doctor, the first with his razor, a rusty bit of hoop-iron, and tar-pail, and the other with his pills made from black soap and slush and flour.

In front and below was hung a sail, holding about seven or eight feet of water, which was to do duty as Neptune's bath. Into this the new chums were plunged, after going through their investigation, getting physicked by the Doctor, and shaved by the Barber, to be rolled about and half drowned, after being nearly suffocated by the court officials.

Neptune put a few questions, and then passed them along to his wife to continue the investigation.

Being well posted up, I acted my part with great

gusto. First of all came the ladies, who were allowed the choice of purchasing their liberty to pass on; from the emigrants coppers were accepted, silver from the second cabin, and only gold taken from the saloon, so that by the time the men came to pass and the ladies had paid toll to Neptune, the sailors had the means gathered to have a right good jollification.

Some of the married men were allowed also to escape by paying toll, but bribes were not accepted from the single men.

Two women seized hold of each one, bringing him up before the god, who hailed him with the question,—

"Where from, mate?"

As the victim opened his mouth to reply, a brush filled with soapsuds and other abominations was stuffed down his throat, so that his answer was a choke or a splutter.

"Take him in hand, wife!" cries Neptune; "he don't look well."

Then I put on an anxious face and sent for the doctor, who instantly prescribed one of his infallible horse-pills, which was crammed into his mouth, nilly willy, after which he was handed over to the barber for a shave and ordered a bath.

A rough shave and rougher bath to those who were not favourites on board. Jabez, after a wild struggle, had to succumb, and was pitched out of that bath more dead than alive; while Sleigher, who had vainly looked for his position on board to protect him, sought shelter in his cabin and refused to move.

"Let him off with a fine, lads," said Mr. Lewis, who was now acting as commander, so they were forced unwillingly to obey, for they had all been looking

forward to the pleasure of having him delivered to their tender mercies for a fair half-hour.

"All right," grumbled Neptune unwillingly. "Zeno Valdez, go aft and give the lubber his choice, only nothing less than a sovereign will do for our fee with him."

When I heard the fine put down at a sovereign, knowing the meanness of this medical usurper, I felt a conviction that he would refuse, nor was my surmise far out, for in a few moments back comes Zeno, with a laugh all over his swarthy face.

"Dr. Sleigher refuses to pay his fine."

"Then, lads, he must go through the operation. Go back again, Zeno, with a couple to help you, and pitch him out."

Valdez and a couple of the seamen went to the cabin, and soon could be seen carrying along a writhing mass of white uniform; the doctor was coming, but without either humour or dignity.

"Now, doctor, you may as well come quietly," observed Valdez, setting him down, "for come you must."

"I shall report you all for this vile assault," sputtered the doctor, nearly black in the face with outraged dignity.

"Report away when you get ashore; only meanwhile you have to report to Father Neptune—so come along."

With a sudden jerk the doctor shook himself free from his captors, and then began a most ignominious flight about the decks, which a little sense of fun on his part might have carried off differently; but, like Jabez, he had no faculty for this; the only quality which he possessed was that puffed-out air of donkey-

ish importance which may suit a languid saunterer, but only seems to make a man ridiculous in an emergency of this kind.

He rushed along, knocking his legs against barrels, boxes, and links of chain, too frightened for his personal safety to stand and pose with dignity, fuming and speechless with revengeful passion, over what he ought only to have laughed at—too niggardly to give in and bail himself off, with the passengers and sailors laughing and rushing after him as if he had been an escaped pig.

"Ah! now Valdez has him," observed Father Neptune.

No, he was off again, this time, like the monkey, towards the shrouds, with the sailors, now sure of their silly prey, mounting behind him leisurely, so as to tempt him higher up.

He had got up half-way when he stopped and looked piteously round. Valdez was close behind, and seemed as if he only needed to stretch out his hands and take him, but he did not do so, preferring to play with him as a cat would do with a mouse.

At this point the monkey, who had been aloft, seeing his chance, made a quick rush down the ropes, and sprang upon his shoulders with such suddenness, that he nearly let go his hold in the start.

"Look out, doctor, or you will fall," observed Zeno from below, while the monkey reascended to his perch, carrying with him the rich gold-laced cap, and leaving the doctor with an exposed head to that fierce sun. "Not that it would matter much as far as you are concerned, only it might hurt me, you know," Zeno added.

"Let me down, and I will give you—"

"How much did you say, doctor?"

"A shilling."

"Nonsense, doctor, you are by far too lavish with your money; you'll ruin yourself if you go on at that way; surely you meant a penny, didn't you?"

The sarcasm of this reply struck even through the doctor's obtuse mind, for he replied quickly,—

"Let me down quickly out of this sun, and I'll make it five shillings."

"Yes, doctor, I think you had better come down, if you don't want sunstroke; come!"

Zeno drew himself on one side, as if to let the doctor pass; then made a sudden clutch at his ankles with his strong lithe right hand, and with a jerk, tore him from his hold on the shrouds, and swung him, head downwards, clear over the sea.

"That will keep you from taking sunstroke, doctor, as we go down."

The victim struggled, but it was of no avail in the hands of this modern Samson, while all the people below laughed to see that descent, the monkey sitting gravely upon the trestle-trees, trying to fit on her hairy head the gold-laced naval cap.

A most prodigious feat of strength on the part of Zeno, who was descending calmly and slowly, holding at the shrouds with one hand, while the other hand was extended and bearing all the weight of that struggling St. Andrew's diploma-holder, with his face now muffled in his jacket flaps, and his loose change and other articles raining down from his pockets and falling into the sea, but Zeno didn't show as if he in any way excited himself, for he wore a placid smile upon his almost perfect features as he came down rung by rung.

"There, that's more comfortable," he cried, as he

tilted the doctor on to the main deck. "Now hand me that five shillings for bringing you in safety down."

The doctor had picked himself up, but was now looking round him in a dazed manner, as if he had lost something, but couldn't quite think what it was, his usually flabby, paste-tinted cheeks flushed with an apoplectic bloom, and quite a lurid sparkle in his generally opaque black eyes.

"Fork out that five bob, doctor. You see Father Neptune is waiting on you."

Dr. Sleigher still continued gazing round him, with that purple radiance over his forehead, when the loud voice of Neptune bellowed out,—

"Bring on that 'er stranger, mate!"

Zeno pushed the doctor, who moved on to each shove passively, until he stood upon our judgment platform, quite astonishing me with his passive compliance.

"Where from, stranger?"

The doctor gave a gasp, upon which the brush, filled with soapsuds, &c., was crammed into his mouth, which seemed to wake him up a little more.

It was a brutal cure for apoplexy, almost as rough as this putty-complexioned sham, in his ignorance, could have invented for those humbler human beings and assisted passengers whom he, in his puffy importance and disregard to their personal feelings, so utterly despised; but I have since been convinced that it saved his reason, if not his life, by the very wholesomeness of its roughness,—saved him to make more mean and ignorant mistakes, on board and ashore. He had to swallow more insults, and got kicks and rebuffs enough to have taken the silly arrogance and

pigheaded, boorish conceit and selfishness out of him, had he been gifted with any other quality except conceit and selfishness.

The captain being below, and rendered useless through the potations and pick-me-ups so freely administered, could not render his evil adviser any assistance; while the first mate, brought up to respect the authority of this lord of misrule, had disappeared into his own cabin to study his charts; so that no one else begged for mercy except it was myself, who, according to my *rôle*, had to pretend to sympathize, as he was dragged from the barber to the first pill-jummer, and finally tilted over the head into the sail-bath.

He woke up to full possession of his faculties when under that rusty hoop-iron razor, and shrieked out with rage and abject terror as the sailors tossed him up and down in that sail, with as much glee and force as ever Sancho Panza was tossed in the blanket, while the onlookers drowned his cries in their wild bursts of mocking laughter, and heard unmoved his choking attempts to bribe his persecutors now that it was too late.

He swallowed enough of that salt water, within which all the despised steerage passengers had been doused before him, to serve him for a lifetime of emetics; but the climax to his retributive persecution was reached when, upon the suggestion of Beauty Burt, the bottle of mopped-up wine was brought up from the stewardess and given to him to drink.

Zeno brought up the bottle, with the unwashed pannikin with which I had filled up the black draught, into which he emptied about half a pint of the abominable mixture, saying in his silky voice to the half-drowned victim,—

"Some of your own special brand, doctor. Drink it up; it will keep the salt-water from hurting you."

The doctor, now completely cowed, looked abjectly upon his tormentors, and asked, in a gasping voice,—

"Is it the bottle I sent to Mrs. Kemp?"

"Oh dear no, doctor; it is the birthday present you sent to Miss Trefusis; she kept it for an emergency like this; so you see you are not uncared for by the ladies."

The doctor at this moment, feeling sick with the salt draught, took a sip from the pannikin; but no sooner had he tasted it than he sputtered it out again.

"I—I—ca—n—not sw—a—ll—ow that stuff."

"You've got to swallow it, doctor, whether you will or not. Here, boys, hold him down, while I give the poor fellow his dose."

They held him down and forced the first half-pint down, in spite of his struggles, while Zeno proceeded to measure out another pannikin full.

This last straw broke the camel's back; for as soon as he could recover his breath, desperation gave him the coward's courage and strength, and with a sudden wrench and yell, such as might have been expected from such a throat as Jabez Carter's, but sounded startling coming from the source it did, he shook himself free from his tormentors, shouting, as he did so,—

"I will not swallow another drop of that vile compound,—no, not—for—five pounds."

"I dare say it's not so nice to swallow as to give," observed Zeno coolly; "however, I'll see if Father Neptune will let you off for that fee."

The sailors once more clutched on to their trembling captive, while Zeno, setting the bottle and can down

on the deck, came over to where we sat enthroned on our casks.

"Father Neptune and your ladyship, the patient wishes to be let off his physic, and offers five pounds if you will grant him this last favour."

"No," roared the poor, unhappy, badgered doctor; "I did not say that, nor will I be tortured and swindled in this manner, if there is law to be had ashore. I protest."

This victim was one of those unfortunate mules who never yield with a good grace, but have to be forced every inch of the way. He was no longer speaking with the idiotic drawl of the period, which accompanied the Dundreary cut of his whiskers, but with a good Hibernian brogue, which proclaimed the nationality he usually denied, and proved how much in earnest he was.

"I won't bay robbed, but protest aginst this murtherin tratement."

"Under these terms we will consent to allow this illustrious stranger to escape. Clerk of the Weather, enter five pounds on your books against Dr. Allan Sleigher," replied Neptune, ignoring the interruption; "and go along to see it is paid, as I am in a hurry to get away; and don't give long credit."

Zeno and the sailors marched off the miserable but vengeful victim of his own stupidity, when, after a few moments, they emerged from the cabin, jingling the coin.

"Did he deliver his fine willingly?"

"We managed to *persuade* him, Father Neptune; he tried it on a little. That's your fee, and five shillings for private advice to myself," replied Zeno, with a broad grin.

So the poor doctor, who loved his money as he loved his body, and who refused to pay the original fee of one pound, had gone through his course of torture, and been compelled to disgorge five pounds five besides, without a soul on board to pity his misfortunes. He lay below, under the steward's care, sick as a mongrel dog, with a face which his own mother could not have recognized, so raked about was it with that sea-shave, and so besmudged with tar and other Neptune-mixtures. We had got past the Doldrums before he was able to present himself at the saloon table. He lay below in his own cabin, brooding over his own wrongs, and concocting plans of revenge, like an ugly Tarantula.

Through that night and for many days afterwards, as we lay becalmed, and the men could do nothing except loll about, waiting on a breeze to help them into the rainy latitudes, Dr. Sleigher's forced five pounds, with the other donations of the passengers, helped to render the forecastle merry and boisterous.

The captain made a diversion on one of the days when the ship lay heaving upon an oily swell, and the sails hung in silent folds about the masts, as the tropic sun blazed down, without a cloud to break the force of his flaming regard, while every man, woman, and child hung pantingly to where they could for coolness and shade, with as little upon them as decency would permit them to discard. He came up on deck clad in heavy pea-jacket, top-boots, and oilskins, under the impression that the ship was weathering a very heavy gale, down somewhere about Cape Horn.

The sailors looked at this exhibition, which astonished the other passengers, with great relief; for they knew the peculiarities of their master, and that this delusion

always came upon the old man when he was leaving off the drink.

"Lor! I've seen him in his pyjamas during a south-wester at the Cape, when the icicles were flying thick enough to chop the teeth out of a man, and we were spinning, close-hauled, before a regular gale, stand up thus, with his grey hair blowing about like to come off, while he complained of the heat, and wondered when the calm was a-going to break," said the boatswain, as he briskly piped his watch out to take in sails. "It's a main sight easier to obey his orders now, when he bids us *bouse*, than at such a time to bid us *douse*."

The watch flew up briskly, in spite of the great heat, to man the yards and furl sail, rejoicing once more to hear their skipper giving orders, such as they were, and knowing by experience that if the doctor could only be kept an invalid for another day or two, their old man would be once more clothed and in his right mind, possibly for the rest of the voyage.

* * * * *

After a fortnight of idleness at the Equator, the wind came and wafted us into the Doldrums, always a welcome latitude to sailors in the days when ships carried all their water-supply in tanks and hogsheads, as it meant fresh water and clean clothes. The Doldrums days were general washing-days with all on board.

The ordinary way of washing on ships when fresh water is scarce (I speak of the days prior to condensing machines) would be to tie a piece of string through the button-holes of shirts and trousers, and pitching them into the sea from the bow, when the wind wasn't too strong, let them trail for an hour or so. As the waves and spray washed them against the sides, the

dirt was knocked fairly well out of them, after which they were hung over the rails to dry.

But in the Doldrums the men could go in for a thorough scrubbing, both of themselves and their habiliments, with soap and fresh water.

In the Doldrums, where the rain fell down unceasingly, and the purple-backed clouds, with their heat-charged and burnished-silver sides bulged up and swelled with their burden of moisture, one over the the other; while the ocean lay like a vast oil-tank, reflecting and trailing down every shadow and light overhead, while the warm showers fell like a tepid bath, swiftly and constantly filling the sail-awnings, hung loosely up to catch the gracious fluid, and the tanks, with its delicious condensed freshness.

With joy they emptied out the putrid sediments which we had been compelled to drink in all its repeated stages of sweetening and rotting which preserved water does, and filled them with this water which would not again grow stale, rolling on the decks and enjoying that hot bath all day long after the sweltering heat of the long calm, and feeling that we never before had properly appreciated this great gift of rain.

When we look out from the window upon muddy roads or dark greens with the persistent rain dropping down as if it would never clear up, when the farmer thinks upon his hay getting musty and heated, and upon the money he is losing thereby, or the school-boy upon his spoilt sports, and the young lady upon the garden party which she will either have to forego or else sit moping amongst a crowd of other miserables, it seems no great gift. To the Australian squatter who has not seen a drop fall for nine months, while

his sheep grub like skeletons amongst the powdered dust or die by hundreds from starvation and thirst, or to the sailor who has lived for weeks on water which ere he can swallow, he must press his nostrils close together to keep himself from fainting with the fumes from his scantily doled out measure, rain means something different. When at length it comes after days of equatorial baking upon skins parched and cracking, what does it seem as they rush out from the shelter of shingled roofs and awning and spread out their arms in much enjoyment, as if to embrace the God-sent precious drops?

How they wallow it and feel new blood surging through them as they get submerged. There is nothing to be compared in this world to that exquisite sensation. Like the soil, after a long drought, drinking in the flood at every crack, we greedily absorb that divine moisture at every pore and seem to grow young again as we take it in; it is, indeed, at such seasons the most precious gift of Heaven.

I still acted in my capacity as doctor's assistant, going to and fro from the cabin to the dispensary during the days that he lay up after that rough treatment. He did not allude to the wine, but I could see that he ranked me amongst his enemies, and only made use of me because he could not help it. Jabez I had caught once or twice slinking from the cabin, and knew that he had gone in for his proper vocation as spy, and thought like the mole, because no one accused him of it, that his actions were unnoticed.

The second mate, still confined to the deck-house and suspended from duty, managed to spend his evenings with Miss Trefusis, while I acted the part of Mercury when wanted.

So matters went ahead, and the vessel forged on her way without much excitement, except for the doings of Beauty and the Beasts, who ran after her, with a suspicious quiet prevailing which felt ominous.

Mrs. Moore came about me cajoling or threatening when she wanted anything, or had wild scenes with her husband about Beauty Burt, who engrossed more of his time than his wife seemed to find agreeable; that affair about the brandy rankled in Mrs. Moore's mind, so that when the two women met there was generally a skirmish in which Beauty came off victorious, as she had a tongue sharp as a rapier and ready, whereas the other was clumsy and slow withal, although as crafty, quite as wicked, and far more coldly cruel in her disposition.

Jabez was one of the clique now who tormented me, for he had gone straight, as he had promised, to James Moore, and while revealing our intentions, had also got that worthy under his own thumb in regard to the letters, so that while I suffered from both scoundrels, James Moore also had his turn of badgering from Jabez.

A miserable time with the fear of discovery and transportation for ever kept vividly before me, for on board ship there can be no chance of escaping from either the troublesome friend or the active enemy.

"I'd be hanged first before I'd stand that slow torture," said Davis, one night to me after I had told him about the persecutions of the day.

"It is making me so miserable, Davis, that I wouldn't care if the ship went down."

"Why don't you up and tell the whole story to Mr. Griffin? I would if I were you, and I bet that he'll find a way out of it."

It was a good idea, and the suggestion brightened me up greatly, so that the next night, while I was sitting in the deck-house along with the second mate, I straightway unbosomed my troubles to the bluff young sailor, who was enduring his own disgrace so bravely, if not patiently.

"That was very bad, Johnny, to sign false letters; it was dishonourable, and you ought never to do a dishonourable action, even for a woman."

"I felt ashamed of it even while I did not know the danger, Mr. Griffin."

"Well, my boy, always take that as the best guide you can have for your actions; it is like the needle with us steering, which always points one way; we have to steer many quarters of the compass, but the needle always keeps us right. Now to my mind there was no harm done when you changed the wine, because you felt no sting of conscience, did you?"

"Not a bit, sir!"

"Neither did the man who nearly broke the land-shark's back with the belaying-pin," added he grimly. "Now you did a good action when you changed the bottles, so you thought to do when you wrote the letters, only in the one case the end was worthy of the deception, but in the other your conscience told you it wasn't."

"Yes, Mr. Griffin!" I could not clearly follow his reason, and replied in an uncertain manner.

"Of course deception is deception all over the world, and a strict fellow would say they were both bad at the start off, only I'm not the sort of chap to chalk up too straight a line; I like to take and give a limit on both sides always."

"But how am I going to get out of this mess?"

"Ay, that's the point to consider about now. You've started wrong at the beginning, and I don't see that you can do right until we have seen those letters destroyed by fair or by foul means. Who has them?"

"I don't know which of the three, Jabez, Mr. or Mrs. Moore."

"If I thought it was that sneaking hound, I'd soon get them for you, if I had to skin him for it, but I dare not interfere just at present with the passengers; yet wait a bit, there will be some changes presently on board the *Flying Fox*, and then I'll be able to help you, lad, so just you hold on and say nothing about it till I give you the word."

"But am I to allow them to rob and bully me as they like meanwhile?"

"No, lad; say you have told me all about it, and that they are to come to me if they want any satisfaction. I can tackle them then if they attempt to come to me here."

Next morning Mrs. Moore came as usual on a black-mailing expedition, and departed in a blind fury when she heard that Mr. Griffin was in my confidence. Mr. James Moore came afterwards with a sneaking air, and told me that I was foolish for myself to divulge such a deadly secret; while Jabez gloomed up at me from the holy-stone with which he was rubbing the deck; but neither of them troubled to go to the deck-house, although they kept the letters.

After the Doldrums we got into the trade-winds and went forging ahead towards the Cape, with the air getting more like English air every day.

That delusion of Captain James was not a true sign of his reform, for the doctor got once more about

before he did, the consequence being that the poor old skipper had a relapse, and only appeared to rave like a madman at Mr. Griffin as he was primed up by his evil genius the doctor.

When this was known to the men, the consultations became a nightly occurrence in the deck-house, and discontented faces went about the deck by day. Mr. Lewis with his extra duty was beginning to look worried and ill, so I could see it would not take much to bring about an open rupture all round; the storm was gathering even while the cause of it all was swelling with importance, and strutting about like a turkey-cock on the poop, giving orders which the weak captain stood by to enforce.

I went about as usual to the passengers and saloon while waiting upon the storm to burst; we all knew that the second mate had made up his mind to rescue the captain from the baneful influence, even although his work might be called mutiny; all they waited for was some extra act of brutality on the part of their enemy to break down the barrier and give them a start.

At the Cape of Good Hope we had a wild storm which while it lasted drove us nearly over to the American coast. During those three days, with the winds and waves driving us out of our course, the doctor lay below, shivering for his life and desperately sea-sick, while the first mate set the second at liberty, and permitted him to keep his watch as usual, after which, when the wind changed and enabled us to retrace our steps, he was once more ordered to the deck-house, while the doctor flaunted his obnoxious person above, regardless of the scowls on all sides, and smiling triumphantly upon his victim.

As the cold weather came on I had more patients, colds and sore throats being the chief complaints.

My cough-mixture did some good at first, but I grew alarmed at the increase of sore throats, and constantly worried the doctor to look after his patients himself, when he came at last and examined one of the young men he alarmed us all by announcing the trouble to be diphtheria.

A spare berth in the steerage was set apart at once, and fitted up as a hospital, and then both of our hands were too full of work to be able to heed other matters.

The doctor was wrong in his opinion about the trouble, as he was in general mistaken whenever a mistake was at all possible, but it made a scare amongst the passengers, which raised him once more on the pedestal of importance from which he had been flung, and gave him a glorious chance for practice, which he very greatly needed.

His imperious commands were now obeyed with alacrity, and he shambled about the quarters like a king amongst his servile subjects; Beauty Burt and her giddy disciples left off their flirtations, and became obedient once more to the rules, so that there were no late hours, every one fearing to speak to his or her companions for fear of the infection from this terrible disease.

Three of the passengers died off before the doctor roused up to his duty; they were quickly rolled in sails and pitched overboard.

"There goes grub for the two sharks which have followed us since we crossed the line," observed the boatswain, after the burial service had been read and the bodies had been consigned to their last home.

"I thought we would have had something of the sort before long."

I forgot to mention that for the past three weeks two large sharks had kept pace with the vessel, lying motionless during the calm, one on either side, and moving as we moved; day and night the monsters never left us, nor would they, said the sailors, until all the deaths had taken place, for their presence was a sure sign of calamity.

It might have been a legend only, or the offal thrown overboard which attracted them and kept them with us, but I have never yet seen them linger long with ships without some fatal consequences.

Unaccustomed and poor diet was the cause of the sore throats, which generous meat and drink would have cured quicker than medicine, but Dr. Sleigher decided it to be diphtheria, and there was no one to gainsay his professional verdict.

He got out his inserting tubes and lancets, eager to begin operating, and I shivered with horror as I followed in his wake.

Amongst the invalids were the twin brothers, Tom and Andrew Fairfax, who shared my cabin.

They took their troubles, as they did everything else, almost simultaneously. Natives of America, they had drifted to London, and were now about to try their fortune in Australia. We used to gather round their bunks at night when they were asleep, and listen to their conversation, for as they dreamt they spoke aloud and replied to one another.

Sometimes they were dreaming that they were at cards, when one would shuffle, and then they went on replying to each supposed deal, so that we knew how they were getting on from their remarks. At other

times we used to take them apart and speak to them on the same subject; their answers never varied, what the one said at one part of the deck so did the other without variation: both seemed to think the same, like two separate bodies and only one brain.

We had them lifted into the hospital along with four other patients, and then Dr. Sleigher decided to cut their wind-pipes, without putting off time with any milder method of cure.

I went with him to help him in the operation and to keep inquisitive passengers back.

As we entered the berth where the poor boys lay speechless, with a slate for them to write upon and answer questions, I shivered with horror, and felt a greater abhorrence towards that cold-blooded, empty-headed quack and sham than ever I had felt towards the ferocious Captain Coffin; his was passion and fear inspiring, as a lion or wild beast might move in the onlooker's breast; this was the blood-curdling advance of the deadly emotionless octopus or snake.

He stooped over the cheerless deal-board table which stood in the centre between the bunks, never glancing at the speechless invalids, who lay upon their cold mattresses with terror-distended eyes, watching him uncover his instruments of torture, but helpless to resist.

"Stand at the door, and don't let any one in," imperiously ordered the doctor, as he took off his coat and rolled up his white shirt-sleeves.

As I stood with my back against the door, keeping the daylight out as well as the passengers, I had to plant my feet wide apart in order to keep my position, for the ship was rolling heavily through those Pacific waves; we were then below the Cape, with no inter-

ruption of land to break the swell, and a stiff trade breeze urging us along.

The motion of the ship kept his instruments in perpetual motion, dancing from side to side without intermission.

"Had I not better call some one else to look after the door, doctor, and hold your instruments for you?"

He turned on me a coldly-hating lack-lustre black eye, and, after looking for an instant, replied curtly,—

"Mind your own business and the door."

After that reply I could only remain where I was, and join with the patients in watching his actions with horrified eyes.

In the dim obscurity—for the only light he had was what came over the partitions from the port-holes beyond—I saw him take up his lancet and stoop over the bunk where Tom Fairfax lay, and bare his throat; then the next moment he turned round with one finger pressed on the wound in the throat to fumble with the other hand over the table for the tube which he had laid there.

I saw what his motion signified, and also that the tube had rolled beyond his reach, but I could not know, as he must have done, that to lift his finger from the throat meant instant death to the poor boy, yet I instinctively took a step forward to hand him the tube, perceiving which he shouted out harshly,—

"Confound you, boy, will you stand where you are, and not interfere with me?"

I instantly shrank back, for at that moment horror at his scientific power had banished all contempt from my heart, and as I did so he made a step forward, releasing his hold of the wound and getting the tube.

I heard a slight gurgle from the bunk where Tom lay, and all was over.

"That was your fault, you stupid young fool," said the doctor, laying down the tube coldly.

"Is he dead, doctor?"

"Of course he is, you ass; dead as a salt herring."

I crouched down against the doorway, shuddering as if I had the ague, with my teeth chattering like dice in a box; it looked so like cold murder in which I was an accomplice, that I felt as if I could never wash the blood from my memory that I could now see trickling in slow drops down that white breast.

"Now, my lad, for you," observed the doctor briskly, turning round to where Andrew lay with eyes dilated in his head with mute horror, such as we have seen in those of a sheep lying in the butcher's cart. "Eh, you want the slate, do you? Well, there it is, but look sharp, as I have a lot to get through besides you before dark."

The boy took the slate and pencil from the doctor's hands, and with great difficulty scrawled a few words, handing the slate back to the doctor when finished, who took it, and, holding it slantways, so that I could see the large text as well as himself, read,—

"*Do not cut my throat as you did my brother's; let me die as I am.*"

"Tut, tut! what nonsense, lie back at once; and mind you don't stir this time from that door."

Andrew was too weak to struggle much in that brutal grasp, and as he seized him I covered my eyes with my hands, and waited with every sense on the strain.

A silent struggle, and then a pause, during which I

seemed to *feel* the same operation gone through—the shirt-front rolled back and the lancet inserted under the larynx, and that horrible fumbling about the table with those white but shapeless fingers, which had no sensitiveness in them; then the fatal gasping gurgle which proved that he had once more murdered his patient rather than yield in his obstinacy to ask me to help him.

It was too much. At that gurgle I sprang up with savage hatred in my heart for this cold-blooded, puffy-faced mass of stupidity, to whom human life was of no more consequence than a sea-gull.

"You beast! you beast! you beast!" I opened the door and sprang up to the main-deck.

"Where away, mate, so fast?" shouted the boatswain, who was lounging near the scuppers.

"From murder! Where is Mr. Lewis?"

"In the store-room you'll find him, I guess."

I rushed along the deck into the second cabin, where the store-room was, and finding Mr. Lewis and the butcher with the purser together, I dashed in, crying breathlessly,—

"Come quick, for that beast is cutting throats below in the hospital."

They didn't ask me who the beast was, but made a rush down to where the doctor still stood, looking in the direction I had taken.

"What do you want here, Mr. Lewis?"

"Don't let him kill any more, Mr. Lewis. I swear to you that Andrew Fairfax didn't want him to do it; see here!"

I lifted up the slate, and showed the writing upon it to the chief mate and the others.

Mr. Lewis read the writing slowly, and then looked

at the dead boys, after which he turned sternly to the doctor, saying,—

"Dr. Sleigher, you had no right to operate upon that boy without his permission."

"This is my domain, Mr. Lewis—"

"No, sir, it is mine as chief in command here while the captain is incapable, and I forbid you to try any more experiments upon my passengers."

"At your risk, dare to interfere between me and my patients!"

"I take the full responsibility of my actions. Go to your cabin, Dr. Sleigher, at once, and consider yourself liberated from duty for the rest of the voyage."

"How dare you—"

"Not another word, sir, or I'll put you under arrest; this must be inquired into when we get ashore. Meanwhile I'll see what I can do for the sick passengers."

"At your own risk."

"Yes, *Mr.* Sleigher, at my own risk. I hope to see your diplomas to-morrow morning; meanwhile go—"

Mr. Lewis was not a very fine specimen of manhood, with his pinched, pock-marked face and undersized figure, but as he stretched out his arm and pointed towards the door I thought he looked heroic.

The doctor collapsed at the mention of the diplomas, and skulked out of the berth like a whipped hound, while the mate turned round to me.

"You can swear that this is that boy's handwriting?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do. Go forward to the galley and fetch me a bucket of hot water, and tell the cook to have a

steaming kettle ready; and you, purser, bring some more blankets and a couple of bottles of rum; we'll try the old-fashioned cure for this trouble."

That night the four patients had a good sleep, and could express their horror verbally at the brutality of the doctor next morning; no more patients died, and with the diphtheria scare and the last two victims' burial the sharks left us for good.

* * * * * *

That night, as I was in the steward's pantry helping him to wash up some of his plates, the saloon door was burst open, and we saw a crowd of figures headed by the second mate, butcher, and Zeno Valdez; they formed a lane, with two hedges of figures.

"What's up now?" I inquired.

"Mutiny, boy, that's all!" shouted out the gigantic butcher, making a lunge forward, "and we mean to punish all who are agin us; do you understand?"

"Of course, you don't think I could be against Mr. Griffin?"

"Of course not, boy; he is only trying to frighten you," said the second mate. "We want you to be our messenger to the doctor, skipper, and chief mate."

"All right, I'll do what you want, Mr. Griffin."

"Hallo, what is all this disturbance about?" cried Mr. Lewis sternly, as he appeared in his shirt and trousers from his berth in the lobby, at the doorway of which the mutineers stood.

Mr. Griffin had still the irons upon his wrists, and hung back rather shamefaced as the chief mate turned upon him; seeing which the burly, thumbless butcher strode forward to the breach.

"It just means this, sir, that we are all tarnation wearied of this yer doctor's captincy, and that we

want to choose another to take us into port; will you be the man?"

"No, sir, I won't take the post of captain."

"Then will you work the ship for us with Mr. Griffin?"

"I'll go on as I have been doing; tell me what else you require?"

"We want the capting locked up where the darned medical lubber kent get at him till he ken take the command again; will you interfere?"

"No, I won't stop you in that, although you must take the consequences when you get ashore!"

"We'll take all that. Also we want the doctor to beg Mr. Griffin's parding for the insults and wrongs he has heaped on him since coming aboard."

"That also you must manage by yourselves. I will go about my duty as usual and interfere with nothing, so that you obey me when I give orders about the ship, and don't attempt to drag me into any of your mutinous plans."

"Done, sir; we ax no more from you, and are content till to-morrow."

"Very well; good night."

"Good night, sir."

Mr. Lewis retired to his berth again, leaving the conspirators to disperse, which they did after fixing guards before the different doorways, so that no communication could take place between the saloon and steerage passengers.

We were now well into the Indian Ocean, with a vast stretch of water between us and the Australian continent, towards which this fair trade-wind was blowing us steadily, so that the duties on board were light, excepting for the occasional changes of weather

which must be looked out for carefully. The man at the wheel turned hand over hand, always with a stolid look upon his face, day and night, with the binnacle lamp by night shining down upon the compass, and the stars shining aloft like other lamps from aerial ships, and a phosphorescent ocean all around.

We had passed already through one of those fierce gusts or typhoons, when the sky is smiling one moment as it were, and the next all is darkness, with the roar of the tempest as it whirls past, leaving in its track desolation. It had come upon us as we were lying idling on deck, and with one shriek followed by a crack like an exploded mine, had torn the main-sail into shreds, and happy for us it was that it had been old and yielded so easily, otherwise the mast might have gone also.

So the men, accustomed to these sudden changes of the fickle ocean, set their watch as usual, half looking after the vessel's safety, and half acting as jailers.

A little after midnight they smuggled the captain into the deck-house, where they now confined him as a prisoner of war; he had been unconscious of the change, so that they only waited upon his awaking to have a wild scene.

Jabez had been caught skulking about the poop, and promptly gagged and tied up to await the hour of trial as a sneak and spy.

Down in the hospital the four invalids were sleeping quietly, while another empty berth had been secured for the twin brothers, who lay side by side, with shirt fronts rolled back, and the oil lamps showing their wounded throats; before the sailors turned in to sleep they each came to look at the brothers, and as they went out again they muttered deep curses of hatred

against the perpetrator of the deed, for the boys had been great favourites with all on board.

Dr. Allan Sleigher had coquetted with fate long enough, his hour of retribution was at hand.

* * * * *

For three days the siege went on; the saloon passengers were permitted to eat when they liked, with the exception of the doctor, who had barricaded himself inside his own apartment, before which a close guard was set to prevent any communication from passing, or help coming to him: they could have taken him by force, but they preferred to starve him into submission, and so they let him lie in concealment, like a vicious hedge-hog, until he chose to come out of his own accord.

During these three days the captain blasphemed and roared himself hoarse with impotent rage at finding himself a prisoner, smashing up the utensils of the deck-house, or whimpering to his jailers for more drink, but they neither heeded his mad paroxysms of rage nor his abject supplications, but kept him on strict diet, the consequence now being that he had become weak and childlike in his submission, sleeping most of his time, with streams of perspiration rolling from him, like beads of newly distilled alcohol.

He had not yet arrived at the stage when he would see snakes and rats, but he was coming to it, and his faithful crew were waiting to fight the devils with him.

I looked in at times to see him, and was appalled at the ghastly face and blood-shot eyes that glared out at me from the bunk in which they had bound him; he was sullen on this third morning, and, as the boatswain said, would see a few "blue 'uns" before night.

The four invalids were up and about, thanks to

Mr. Lewis and his rum, which had saved them from a scientific death.

On the first day of confinement the doctor was imperious and obstinate, still keeping a well-barricaded door between his person and his jailers; on the second day he was hungry and savage, threatening dire consequences in the name of the law; on the third day he was craven and ready to sell his manhood for a mess of pottage: it is astonishing how quickly a poltroon can be brought to his knees when his stomach is punished. The hero alone looks like a man then; he grows weak and subdued in his body, but his will remains firm; while all below the standard of hero go through the different stages of beastdom, first the lion roaring, then the tiger howling and vicious, next the wolf cowardly and snappish, and lastly the starving mongrel hound ready to lick any dirty hand which gives him the bone before the gift is bestowed, and bite it afterwards.

The doctor was not of the heroic order, but a long degree below that standard. I was the ambassador from the forecastle to the saloon, and on my first visit he received me with abuse and reproaches, on the second with abuse mixed with entreaties and weak attempts to bribe for food; on the third he fell fawning and abject upon me, saying he would agree to do anything they wanted, so that I brought him something to eat and drink first.

So I went forward and reported his submission to the forecastle, and then crossed to the galley without loss of time, where I procured him a good breakfast, for boy-like I felt that hunger must be an awful punishment, even although I don't think I would have given way so very quickly.

While he was engaged in wolfing the fish-balls and curried fowl, the men were getting up a judgment throne with a place of execution behind, for he had consented to be tried, and his door was taken off the hinges, so that he might no longer shut himself in.

"What is that rope for, boatswain?" I asked him, as I saw him swing one over the mizzen main-yard, with a running noose at the end.

"To string the lubber up, if so be as he tries any more o' his slimy tricks on us; we ain't agoing to stand another!"

"Will you hang him if he resists?"

"As safe as eggs is eggs, you bet, our lads are in earnest now, and know that they may as well be in for a sheep as a lamb."

When all the preparations were completed, the passengers from both cabin and steerage were called up to witness the submission and public apology of the doctor.

Miss Trefusis did not appear upon deck amongst the passengers, she was the only one absent from the saloon, with the exception of the captain and Mr. Lewis. Mr. and Mrs. Moore also were not amongst the steerage audience, and Jabez the only absentee from the forecastle.

"I'll have your letters for you to-day, Johnny," whispered Mr. Griffin as he passed me on his way to the judgment platform. The butcher represented the judge, and appeared to enjoy his post of honour vastly, grinning round like a Jacobin during the reign of terror. Zeno stood gracefully poised with the end of the yard-arm rope in his hand; belying in his slender beauty the vast strength of that perfectly balanced figure, he was the nearest approach to a sea-dandy I have ever seen.

They had chosen him as executioner, and he seemed to be restless to begin, so intently did he watch the cabin door from whence the doctor might be looked to emerge, and so feverishly did he play with the rope that he had no time to look at Beauty Burt, who stood close by watching his rare lines with the gratification with which a horse-fancier might look over the points of a first-class thoroughbred, there being no jealousy or love in the glance, only unadulterated admiration, and the contented enjoyment of a virtuoso; she evidently, while admiring his animal qualities, appreciated him all the better for liking his present appointment.

When the messengers from the deck tribunal reached the cabin, they found the doctor had advanced to the biting stage after repletion, he was not going to degrade himself, &c., &c.

However, a few shakes from the seamen brought him to his senses, so that he only allowed his foolish tongue to wag while they braced his arms behind him, and pushed him forward through the lines of unsympathetic passengers and sailors towards the place where Hiram Coster sat, with his still inflamed-looking but enormous thumbless hand hanging over the end of a barrel which had been placed beside him.

Zeno's rich brown eye lighted up with sudden flame as he saw the doctor come forward bound, a savage flame that with his ivory small teeth shining out in the laugh with which he greeted the poltroon, made him look like a young leopard gambolling with a rabbit; he knew that his victim was once more obstinate, and that there would be fun before he gave in.

"Bring up the other prisoners," shouted Hiram boisterously.

As the sailors brought up Jabez with Mr. and Mrs.

James Moore, all tied with ropes as the doctor was, I noticed that they were followed by the monkey, the pelican and the little browny-black Persian cat; the monkey clambered upon the shoulders of Zeno, where she sat also restlessly playing with the rope as if she meant to be assistant executioner; pussy gravely took her seat upon the barrel top where Hiram's hand lay, looking with steadfast but disapproving eyes upon the prisoners, while the pelican stood on the right side of the judge, with his solemn head in the air, after the manner of a court usher.

Dr. Sleigher came forward with a push from behind at every step, and a look of sullen fear upon his lowering face, but when he saw the noose, with Zeno at the end of it, he turned to a sickly pallor, and took the last two steps forward without any assistance.

Overhead the forenoon sun was streaming through fleecy clouds, with a deeply blue sea rising and falling in crisp little waves with white crests, as if they were chasing one another, and a light but steady breeze bulging out all the sun-silvered sails.

Along the poop, down the steps, and for some distance over the main-deck stood a double line of the sailors and single men passengers, the former in their heaviest sea-boots, and the latter in the strongest they could find, and as some of the young men were English labourers, their feet coverings were by no means light weights. The rest of the passengers were ranged round where they could find room and get the best view of the proceedings.

"Prisoner!" began Hiram Coster, with an air such as Judge Jeffreys must have worn during one of his bloody assizes, it was so grimly humorous and so ferociously gloating, "I guess and calculate that

you've got to answer to several lynching charges since you set your blessed land legs aboard this yer ship, and the first question as I have to put to you is, what kind of a right have you to tack M.D. to your gory name?"

"I refuse to answer that question."

"Ho! ho! mates, he refuses to answer this yer tribunal; Billy Saunders, jist you hop down to his cabin, and see if you can find his papers anywhere."

"It is useless seeking there; I have no diplomas with me!"

"Very well, we're content to take your word for it; now where did you earn your title to be called doctor?"

No reply, only a further blanching of the yellow cheeks.

"Chuck that 'ere noose over the lubber's head and give him two minutes by this yer watch, Zeno, to answer my question, after which, when I call 'time's up,' jist you hoist him aloft."

"Right you are, jedge!" observed Zeno, placing the running noose round the obstinate one's neck with an easy air, the monkey all the time fumbling with her claws about the fastening with such a professional air that it made some of the spectators laugh outright.

"Don't forget, doctor, or Moko will bite, his teeth are very close to your left ear now."

The ear referred to gave a distinct flap of nervous fear.

"Gentlemen! I protest against this treatment!"

"Who killed the twins?" yelled the sailors.

"Will no one come to my aid?" The doctor looked round the group of cold, unfriendly faces despairingly, no one seemed to sympathise with his position, all appeared waiting on the termination; along

the poop, down the steps, over to where the steerage single women waited, not even there did he get a look of commiseration.

"Mrs. Burt—Beauty, will you not say a word?"

Beauty stepped briskly from the group of girls right opposite him.

"See here, Dr. Allan Sleigher, no doubt you fancy yourself to be a regular lady-killer with those spreading dyed whiskers of yours, and may be I have humoured you in that delusion, but surely you can't imagine, even with your vanity, that I would put off my time begging your pitiful life from men like Hiram and Zeno there; besides, we all want a show this morning and you have to play in it, so try if you can look a bit gamey——bah!" said Beauty, turning away and spitting on the deck in her disgust, "I've seen a kinchen layer show more pluck!"

"Look out, Beauty, time's about up, and he may kick out as he rises; Zeno, all ready?"

"Ready, jedge!"

"Then give him a clear hoist, you and the monkey, at the word three, ——one, ——two!"

The doctor collapsed. "Stop!" he cried.

"Wall, whar was ye bred as a physician?"

"St. Andrew's!" growled the poor doctor.

"Then you carry a St. Andrew's diploma, do you?" asked one of the second cabin passengers.

"Yes!"

"Then, Mr. Sleigher, you have no more right to your title than I have, for I also carry one!"

"Ha! ha!! ho! ho!!" bellowed out the sailors in a chorus of different tones.

"Now, prisoner, we won't press home the charge of murder jist now, for you must answer that when you

get ashore, if you ever do, but to come to our present business with you, which is this, you have insulted one of our officers and caused him to wear his present ornaments, are you willing to make a public apology for this to him?"

"Under protest only, I will."

"Under the rope you mean. Johnny, have you got the key of the bracelets?"

"Here they are!" said I, stepping forward with the key of the handcuffs, which, according to instructions, I had brought from the cabin.

"You request the boy to unlock the irons, do you not, prisoner?"

"Under protest only, I do."

"You are witnesses to this, passengers?" said the butcher, looking round.

"We are!"

"Johnny, undo the darbies!"

I unlocked the irons and set the second mate free, who rose from his seat and stood over against the doctor.

"Down on your knees, prisoner!"

The doctor remained standing, with an icy gleam of hatred in his glance at Mr. Griffin.

"On your knees!"

"No, I will not!"

"Up with him, Zeno!"

Zeno and the monkey both gave a tug at their end of the rope, which lifted the doctor about an inch from the ground.

"Stop!" he gasped, as he came down with a thump, "I yield!"

"That's right, prisoner, as far as you are concerned, now repeat after me: 'I am truly sorry for my spiteful behaviour, and beg your pardon and I grant your grace!"

"Under protest—" began the doctor, from his knees.

When there is an apology to be made, there is only one way to do it gracefully, and that is quickly, spontaneously and completely. Dr. Allan Sleigher could not do it right, it was an ungraceful apology, forced from his mouth every word with a tug from Zeno and the monkey, and a mocking burst of laughter from the wanton Beauty Burt.

He apologised to the mate, the butcher, purser, boatswain, Zeno, crew and passengers; there were many protests, long pauses, and hard tugs of the rope, but he got it through even to the youngest child, and the ship in general.

"Dash me, but he must apologise to my pelican also!" roared the boatswain, elated at the utter debasement of the half-strangled victim.

"And the cat, by George!" said Hiram.

"Not forgetting my monkey," added Zeno; so the words went on. The monkey looked wisely down upon his head as he knelt to repeat the formula, then fancying she saw something interesting there, stretched forward her two claws and began moving the hair about in quite a natural way, to the intense merriment of the passengers all; the pelican listened with one eye shut, as if he was pondering upon the advisability of accepting such a clumsily rendered apology, listened with his bill upon his breast, and in an attitude as if he had his hands behind a dress-coat tails; as for puss, she heard the first few words with the air of a suffering martyr, then, as if she found it all too great a bore, she suddenly pounced forward and bit at the downcast nose in front of her, and with a swollen tail swinging about, sprang over his shoulders and into the companion way.

"Now, prisoner, stand up and get your sentence; you are to go down those steps and back again, fast or slow, as best suits you; ready, boys, with your boots?"

"All ready, judge!"

"And the Lord have mercy upon your poor hide if you linger on the road—off!"

Zeno gave the doctor a push and a kick, which sent him into that living lane; he did not pause to gather himself, but ran as he never had done before, with the men on both sides kicking out as he ran.

Some missed and some didn't, as he reached the end nearest the galley-house, but those who missed in the going got him in the coming, as he ran amuck down and up that lane, so that when he got to the companion way there were not many toes but had left their sign-manual upon that tender skin.

After the doctor's came Jabez's examination, in which, under the gentle pressure of the noose, he produced the three letters, which the second mate handed to me, saying,—

"Don't wait till night to destroy these, my boy." Upon this hint I ran down the lane a little before Jabez; the men let me pass freely, but paid out my sneaking enemy as they had done the doctor, so that he returned hobbling to the forecastle, a sadder if not a wiser young man, while I went over to the stove and watched the documents burn, with a lighter heart than I had felt for weeks.

James Moore was served like Jabez, while his wife they let off with a severe caution; sailors don't fight women, which had been her only recommendation to their mercy.

* * * * *

That night, after supper, they buried the twin-

brothers, with a thin silver-rimmed moon shining low on the dusky horizon, and the thousands of stars coming out above like flashing diamonds and rubies on that grim dark space. They lighted a torch or two in honour of the poor lads, and to let Mr. Lewis see the church service, which he read in his deep rumbling voice, while over the words now and then could be heard the awful yells and curses of the skipper, who was now fighting the drink legions of hell, as they swarmed over him in their loathsome disguises—an awful interruption to those tear-laden, heart-piercing words of everlasting hope.

Then as the Union Jack, which wrapped the twin bodies, slid from the gratings, they sent up a rocket and burned a couple of blue lights over the side to frighten away the sharks and see the last of them.

We heard the splash, as the sharks darted back before the light, and then the slipping aside of the water as the loaded bundle disappeared quietly, except for the hissing of the fire-sparks that spluttered from the lights, and the disjointed yells and shouts from the deck-house.

Not one dry cheek amongst those tender-hearted mutineers as they leaned over the rail and sobbed even while they swore at the man who had slain the boys.

"When the sea shall give up her dead!" read on the deep, solemn voice of the first mate, amid the sobs and mutterings of the men, while from the deck-house came in hoarse tones of mad triumph,—

"There, that's the fifteenth damned imp I have choked to-night, all of them sky-blue with scarlet tails!"

CHAPTER VI.

MORETON BAY.

FOUR months after we had been rescued by the *Flying Fox* we reached Moreton Bay; that was about five and a half months after leaving England from land to land.

A good long passage, but considering the light winds at this time of the year not too long for a sailing vessel in those days.

The captain had recovered his senses after some very hot engagements with the blue spirits of the lower world, those bottle imps who break out every now and again, and run riot over man's soul; Mephistophelian fiends who slip in at the mouth gate one by one, and lie *perdu* until they are strong enough to rise up and sack the citadel, for although they may be driven out, it is only with heavy losses that they are conquered, leaving behind them broken walls and damages never to be quite repaired.

Captain James seemed older by years than when he last left port, his legs and hands were shaky, his hair thinner and whiter, and his vitality almost gone, but he now walked the decks sober, and gave his commands with calmness.

He had confirmed the orders of Mr. Lewis respecting the doctor, taking his duty upon himself and using

the ship medicine-chest, Doctor, or rather Mr. Sleigher, being requested to dine by himself for the rest of the voyage by desire of the saloon passengers.

He had also chosen to ignore the action of the crew, both as regarded himself and their duty, and reinstated Mr. Griffin without remark to his former position, an act of simple justice which gave general satisfaction to the passengers, and particular pleasure to Miss Trefusis.

So the time passed with the master's eye over all and universal order and peace being the consequences; the single girls went to their quarters betimes, for the captain visited them night and morning, even Beauty Burt gave way before those stern, if dim blue eyes and that drink-shrivelled, storm-beaten face, a different man now that he was sober, for he spoke quietly always, hardly ever commanding, but every man sprang to his post with alacrity at his word.

He was one of those great minds which ignored all petty causes of annoyances, and preferred not to see what he could not indulge openly rather than seem the tyrant; he walked the poop for hours in the starry nights, and passed and repassed Miss Trefusis and her lover, but he never addressed them, and they knew better than call his attention to their united presence; they much preferred to be ignored at such moments.

Once only I saw him break out, which was when the butcher dared to presume to contradict an order of his about some provisions which had been short—a leg of mutton which he had given to Beauty Burt for her Sunday dinner.

"What, sir! you say I am wrong?" and swiftly picking up a marline-spike, which the sail-maker was

using, he brought it with all his might down upon Hiram's head, felling him like an ox.

Hiram picked himself up, and muttered in his stubbly beard; it was his first voyage, and he was not yet used to the captain's ways, but the captain walked away, and no one paid the least heed to the correction, so that Hiram only went into his shed, and filling a pipe sat down to smoke without troubling to wipe the blood from his cut head.

I watched Hiram as he smoked; a fleshy, flat, German-like face, with low brow and bull-like neck, something of the character in its bloated fairness like the picture of Henry VIII. by Hans Holbein (as Henry might have looked had he held the subordinate position of ship instead of king butcher) and I thought that it wasn't his fault that the mutiny had been a bloodless one.

The day was just breaking as we sighted the sugar-loaf shaped glasshouse hills in Moreton Bay: and such a dawn; after long months with only a straight line of purple horizon, to see the line broken up by hills, it was entrancing, it brought back in a flash that castle on the hill at home as I had last seen it, the rustling of the elm-tree, and the old folks whom I might never see again, and as I looked and thought my heart swelled and my eyes grew wet, until the amber and rose-tinted mountains with the opal lustre behind and purple lines in front, all became blurred and trembling with prismatic flashes.

"Land, Davis, at last; do you see it?"

"Ay, Jack, not much difference from our hills at home," replied my black smudged-face friend.

"Wait till we land and you'll see the difference."

A dawn of life and radiance, with air soft and mild

as only a Queensland morning can break; no sense of depression can linger before those gloom-chasing, lung-invigorating inhalations; if the heart swelled for a time with memories it was no dreary emotion which swelled it, but the thrilling melancholy produced by a strain of music which recalls something passed away even while filling up and lulling the present.

The air was filled with sensuous warmth and pulsating colours, ozone freighted sighs played upon flushing cheeks, while through the clear waves the fish swam by myriads, or leapt into the air thronged with insect life.

Boxes were ransacked for their best attire and roped up again, the holds opened and the windlasses got ready, and when the passengers came up on deck, it was more that the air might take the creases out of their dresses and suits put on for the first time since leaving home, than to look at the unaccustomed sight of land.

George Ringold and his friend Harry came up almost appalling in the unsubdued glory of their satin ties and gay vests; they were decidedly the most conspicuous objects amongst the males on board, and Beauty, who had ignored them while in their old suits during the voyage, with a true woman's instinct for finery and gay colours, edged towards where they stood like two bran-new aristocrats, with splendidly polished boots and beavers, and opened upon them her most engaging and friendly smile, giving the handsome Zeno and the gigantic Hiram the complete go-by in her new-born admiration for these perfect Liverpool swell-mobsmen.

I must say that I also admired their easy and jaunty carriage prodigiously, and envied them the

way they cut the air or slashed at their fawn-coloured trousers with their silver-headed malaccas; they were ready to begin operations ashore, and clearly showed in every action that they felt not a saloon passenger was in it while they were there.

Davis dived down to get soap and water, ashamed for the first time of his sooty face, and afterwards appeared in such a state of polish and redness that the rising sun looked pale and sickly before him.

About seven bells we were boarded by the Government steamer, containing the health officer and water police; as he came on board and saw the two retired pickpockets he lifted his hat respectfully to them thereby showing that fine clothes have a greater value than philosophers usually attribute to them.

He saw the captain and passed a clean bill of health, which meant that the ship was at liberty to proceed up the river; afterwards the doctor hastened to gain his ear and told the tale of his wrongs, the result being that Mr. Griffin, Hiram, Zeno, and a few of the ringleaders were ordered into the steam yacht and taken possession of by the water police.

I heard the captain call Mr. Griffin aside and bid him keep up his courage as he would not appear against him, and also with satisfaction saw Mr. Lewis charge the doctor with the death of the twins, so that they all left the ship together, the medical murderer and the mutineers.

Miss Trefusis hung round her lover's neck before he was borne away, regardless of appearance, regardless of the air of astonishment with which her wealthy father, who had come with the Government boat, viewed this strange exhibition.

"Good-bye, darling; I'll not leave Brisbane till I

know that you are safe and free," from the tear-bedewed young lady.

"You'll see me soon, dear girl," shouted the favoured lover, while the doctor darted lurid glances of sullen hatred at the pair.

"I see that my daughter has been looking after herself, captain," observed Mr. Trefusis dryly, pointing over his shoulder at the pair.

"They mostly do on board ship, Mr. Trefusis," replied the captain.

The two old gentlemen went into the saloon, leaving the young lady with eyes only on the lessening boat which took away her sailor, waving her handkerchief frantically when she was not wiping her eyes with it.

"Funny thing love, isn't it, Davis?"

"Yes, Jack, makes rare fools of folk."

"Glad I never felt it, Davis."

"You would be an ass if you did, after getting those letters back," observed Davis slyly.

"Wouldn't I?"

At that moment I noticed Mrs. Mary Moore, with her baby on her arm, leaning her heavy tangled mane against the galley door as she spoke to the cook within. She was looking sentimentally this morning at the little hunchback, and had on a clean frock for show, a crimson maroon that did not suit her at all, either in shape or colour, and she had put an extra supply of grease upon the fair tangle which never could be tidy. How ugly she looked with the mouth that hung at the corners when in repose, in spite of her clear skin and red cheeks, with that heavy cluster of yellow hair; I shuddered with a great disgust as I repeated to Davis,—

"Would I not be a fool ever to fall in love?"

With that last glance of malignant spite Dr. Allan

Sleigher passed out of my life; I heard about his career though at odd times when his ominous name chanced to crop up.

His chief witness against the mutineers on whom he could depend had been Jabez, who with characteristic prudence had gone over to the winning side, and sworn to things which damaged the doctor rather than otherwise. I was not called, neither was the chief mate or captain; however both attended the court, the former showing the slate and talking about the maltreated throat operations, the result being that though his Government appointment saved him from direct punishment, yet he left the court with a very severe censure on his incapability to practise the profession of medicine. The mutineers were sentenced to forty-eight hours' imprisonment for setting at defiance their articles of service.

The doctor left Queensland, and was next heard of as having been captured and imprisoned for some Havanna smuggling affair.

Again we heard of his star in the ascendant, as having been the only medical pretender on the spot when some distinguished dignitary met with an accident, in connection with which his name was mentioned in the colonial papers with the reflected glory of being chosen attendant to his Greatness. After that for a year or two he flourished in a fashionable locality as a ladies' physician, getting his name often pushed into papers in connection with charities and endowment schemes.

Last news of all, that he had received a life sentence for malpractices. It is hard to keep such fingers free from pitch. The prison doors closed on him, and I heard of him only once again, viz. one engaged in idioti-

cally twirling his thumbs outside the chapel door of a Tasmanian prison, with slobbering mouth and mindless goggling eyes.

"A filthy imbecile which it would be a charity to knock on the head," said the warder who was showing the visitors round.

Pass on, medical humbug, and off.

* * * * *

By noon we were well into the Brisbane river, under the charge of a smart little dirty tow steamer, which panted and darkened half the heavens with the wood smoke from her funnel, making grey shadows flit over the inexpressibly charming sun-laved landscape.

In its windings the river reminded Davis and me of the river we had last rowed down with Jabez as our prisoner, only muddier, with a little less of interest on the banks, slime banks and yellow baked clay with scattered patches of withered grasses, and beyond these vast forests of the eucalyptus with grey green sad-coloured leaves, presenting their thin sharp edges to the sunbeams and revealing their gaunt white knarled limbs. These trees appeared to be scantily clad in foliage until some passing gust shook them up, when they showed their density.

In parts the wooden shanty roughly put up on the half-cleared selection, with the log fences dividing them from the unclaimed land, met the eye as we glided on, or a group of aborigines lazily squatting on the shore, or maybe a Chinaman's hut picturesquely held together with old meat-tins flattened out; then round another bend and we can see the new city before us with its wharfs where the ships and steamers are moored, with terraces above, whereon a jumble of white painted wooden houses stand with verandahs

and gardens, where banana-trees predominate with wide ugly spaces of unoccupied ground between, where all the rubbish had been shot. A picturesque site with the making of a fine city by and by, but as yet without a definite plan.

From the river as we passed Bowen terrace and prepared to moor, it looked very gay, busy and thriving, ships loading and unloading, with crowds of figures running about the gangways, while on the wharves stood even more than the usual crowds of loafers with varied costumes, white predominating; we were not yet close enough to notice details.

"The captain wants you two boys in the cabin," said Mr. Lewis to us as we stood watching the preparations for landing.

When we got to the cabin we found the captain and Mr. Trefusis together.

"These are the castaways we picked up on the passage out."

"And what are you going to do ashore, boys?" asked Mr. Trefusis.

"We don't know, sir."

"Well," said the captain, "this gentleman here is willing to take you on to his station and find work for you if you like, or if you prefer to stick where you are and go the round with me, I am willing to enter you on the ship's list; you, Davis, to help in the galley, and you, Johnny, as cabin-boy. What do you say? You'll see the world a little more by going with me, as our next stopping-place is Hongkong."

Davis and I looked at one another and read the same resolve in each other's eyes.

"Please, sir, we are much obliged to you both for your kindness, but we would rather stay where we are."

"All right, my lads: now I'll tell you what I'll do for you, I can't give you wages for what you have done, as you were not engaged when you came, but your wages will commence from the day you sign your papers, and for what you have done I'll take you up to the Company's store and fit you both out in a good sea-going kit. Will that please you?"

"Thank you, sir, we are grateful for your kindness."

"There, that will do, now be off and take a day to yourselves, I'll see you about the papers to-morrow; here is something for you to spend ashore, and take my advice, sleep aboard to-night."

The kind old stern-faced captain put his hand into his pocket and pulled out two half-sovereigns, which he handed to us as he pushed us roughly out of the cabin. Davis and I ran up with flushed faces and happy hearts to the main-deck; before, we had been doubtful as to what we would do at the termination of our voyage, and vague fears had troubled us as to the uncertainty, but now our future, for a time, was secured, and we were at liberty to look round with only the schoolboy's lightheartedness.

We were now moored alongside of the wharf, and the decks were filled with strangers, hotel touts, porters, loafers, friends who came to meet their relatives from the old country, a bustling scene of hand-shaking, leave-taking, and re-unions.

The emigrants went to depôts provided for them near the wharves, that is, those who wished to do well, where they could stay and have rations until they found work. We saw one another as we knocked about the streets, staring at all the sights, but we were separated, and no longer of the *Flying Foxite* family, we laughed and jested to one another as we

rubbed against each other, then passed on to enjoy the place for ourselves.

There are journeys through life which leave an interest always in the subsequent fate of those so long linked together, partings where the parted never again meet! Such a journey has been ours.

Many passed out of my life at this point. Mr. Lewis left the ship here and took a post in another vessel going to Calcutta, leaving the captain without a chief; the old cook also thought to settle in the new country, and when we left he had started an oyster saloon and was doing a thriving trade; Davis and I were amongst his first customers, with part of the change of our half-sovereigns.

Mr. and Mrs. Moore left, and we saw them no more.

Mrs. Beauty Burt was met by her brother, who had been engaged in business along with her husband in Ipswich. She parted from her lovers with effusion, promising to see Zeno and Hiram before they again sailed, a promise which she kept to the letter.

Her history for the next two days was a tragedy. On board the little steamer on the passage up to Ipswich, she lured a stranger to her side, one of those reckless flotsam who turn up at new places. This new admirer, picking a quarrel with her brother, who resented the familiarities of the two, lifted him suddenly up and pitched him overboard. Beauty's brother never rose to the surface again, for the sharks were thick about that portion of the river, where the salt water was not yet quenched with the fresh, and while the rest of the passengers were excited she only remained composed.

On reaching Ipswich she mocked at her husband,

and took a passage back again to Brisbane with the murderer of her brother; here she discarded him, and after a time we saw her upon a thoroughbred horse in a gay habit, riding about the streets at all hours, and known as the wicked Beauty Burt; she had settled down to her vocation.

* * * * * *

Davis and I found occupation enough in walking about the streets and looking at the houses! how fine the shops looked! How grandly the people were dressed! ladies trailing Chinese silk costumes over the dusty roads with fully a yard of train, but speaking and jesting coarsely with the men, who sauntered about with white trousers and embroidered shirts and panama hats with gold fringed puggarees dangling down—gay young sparks who twirled their moustaches and wore thin elastic-sided boots with high heels, who smoked long cigars, and had such slender waists and graceful ways of shaking their white ducks that we could only gape and wish to emulate.

We also saw lines of men standing at street corners who never moved; they were in all positions, some sitting down, some lying, some standing at one side, some the other, some fronting, some presenting their backs as we passed, but none of them shifted their positions all the time we passed them, and remembering what we had read about Hindoo devotees, we asked a boy who was passing what they were.

"Why, loafers to be sure."

"What are loafers?"

"Fellers who han't got only one side to show," was the reply.

"How can that be?"

"Wall, you see, this is the only decent side they can

show to passers-by, the other three are so tattered and torn."

"But how have they got in such a state?"

"They are gold-diggers," replied the boy with a grin, as he passed on.

As Davis and I were passing a group of these unsuccessful diggers, he suddenly grasped me by the arm and whispered,—

"Quick, Jack, come here."

"What is it, Davis?" I asked him as I followed.

"Look over there."

I glanced over in the direction Davis pointed, to see amongst the loafers who stood sideways, waiting on night, the splendid figure and massive profile of Captain Coffin; he was dressed in a serge pair of trousers and a ragged shirt, while upon his head was jammed a woman's straw bonnet, bootless, stockingless, unwashed, uncombed in hair and beard, still with a daredevil cast about his swarthy profile and figure that charmed me despite of my horror.

"Captain Coffin!"

As I murmured the words he slowly turned his blazing black eyes to my direction and saw us before we could escape. What a Satanic gleam lighted up his features as he recognized us; my heart shrank and shrivelled up at that joyous gleam.

"Hey, my brave boys, come here!" he shouted, as boisterously as of old, and we could not resist that piratical voice. "Lord, did you escape from that fire?" said he. When we stood beside him, he was standing with his left side hidden by the hoarding.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, after all, there must be a God of some sort; say, have you any chink?"

We produced a shilling each, which he eagerly clutched.

"That will do to set me up in life; now, can you manage to get me a needle and some thread, for I cannot move from here till I get some stitches in my pants?"

Davis said he would try, and went into a store, where he shortly after emerged with a packet of needles and a hank of thread.

"Now, boys, wait one moment and I can talk to you."

The captain, with a scientific air, proceeded to thread his needle and draw together the rags which were on the other side. In a few moments he could turn towards us, and said,—

"Now I can talk to you, my lads."

"Willey you lendey me stitche, stitche?" inquired a guttural voice near by, and we turned to see the speaker, a tall, stout Chinaman, clad in an old flannel shirt and trousers, who as yet presented only his back look to our view.

"Certainly, John, stitch up your front and show us your face."

We all waited while the Chinaman plied the needle, and while we waited Captain Coffin told us how he escaped.

"We were picked up by a steamer going to Sydney, and arrived there two months ago; since then I have been knocking about the diggings and one thing and another until I am as you see me, dead broke."

"What about the rest?"

"Oh, some got ships, others went up the country, but I have had enough of this blessed place, and if I can win enough on billiards to-night to buy me a decent suit, I'll try for some ship."

"You playee?"

"Yes, John, do you?"

"Some, you bet."

"Say, boys, can you lend John another bob a-piece for half an hour?"

We handed out another shilling to the Chinaman, who bowed gracefully and took it.

"Me payee back in halfee houl."

"Wait for me for a moment, lads."

The captain picked my hat from my head as he spoke, putting on the woman's straw bonnet in its place.

"I'll make enough in half an hour to pay you back with interest, you bet."

Before we could recover ourselves, Captain Coffin and the Chinaman disappeared into a drinking-saloon, leaving us to wait for them amongst the unfortunate gold seekers.

Half an hour passed, and while we were yet looking around us and studying the variety of rags and attitudes about us, the captain appeared with his companion, handing me my cap and our money back, for it was not in little things that he showed any meanness.

"There, boys, and thank you for the loan. I have made thirty shillings since I left you. What have you got, John?"

"A lilly more," replied John, smiling gently.

"Where are you staying?"

We told him, because we dare not equivocate to this man.

"I'll look down to-morrow, and see you on board; perhaps I may get a billet. Now, John, let's in again and finish our game."

We left the captain and the Chinaman at the door of

the drinking-saloon—and went our way, feeling as if we were in the midst of a nightmare.

It was an unfortunate cap that of mine, for within half an hour after leaving the precious pair, as Davis and I were passing along Bowen Terrace, I felt it suddenly lifted off my head, and upon looking up saw it ascend with a rotatory motion towards the sky, growing less as it rose in the air until it looked like a lark in the blue space.

"What's up now?" said Davis, looking at the small black spot with gaping mouth.

"I suppose that is a small whirlwind, although I don't feel the slightest breath about to-day."

After a time the whirlwind seemed to break, for the hat came slowly down in as straight a line as it had risen. With a little dodging as it came near, I caught it upon my head in much the same position as when it rose.

It was a Sunday that we landed in Brisbane, which accounted for the gay dresses of the ladies and the number of people that we saw walking about, although it did not seem to make any difference in the shops, saloons, or work going on at the wharfs. The sun was fearfully hot, although at one time we were much refreshed by a light sunny shower, which fell during the forenoon, and for a few seconds cooled the air. As we stood waiting at a street-corner for the shower to pass, an aboriginal accosted us in a whining voice, asking for a penny.

He was fantastically dressed in a tall white hat with a crape band round it, a vest, without any shirt, and a pair of ladies' drawers; and after we had both laughed at the odd fashion, Davis gave him a copper, whereon the fellow changed his whine to a threaten-

ing tone, seizing hold of Davis and trying to get his hands into his pocket.

While we were struggling, both in a state of great fear, with the black fellow, a young man came lounging past, who lifted his foot and sent the would-be robber flying several paces away, where he stood looking at the patent leather boot ruefully, and rubbing the part lately in contact with it.

"That's the way to treat black fellows, boys. Never give them anything if you don't want to be ill-used by them."

All day long we walked about, going into a refreshment place when we were hungry, stretching our legs and feeling as we walked that the roads were rocking under our feet, and feasting our eyes with the sight of houses, shops, and strange faces.

The sun was setting as we prepared to return to the ship; a sun which dropped quickly behind the bush, with a twilight of seconds, then a deep, limpid obscurity filled with the heavenly electric lights. In the streets the oil-lamps were being lighted, while inside drinking and gambling saloons flared out countless candles and paraffin centre-pieces.

We stopped at the place where we had left Captain Coffin and the Chinaman in the morning, and looked up to the open windows of the billiard-room, where we could see the men in their shirts and trousers, with necks thrown open and sleeves rolled back, smoking, drinking, swearing, and laughing, while they handled the cues over the green tables or shifted the markers.

Amongst the players we could see the bold Captain Coffin, and hear his loud, brassy voice rolling out amongst the volumes of smoke as he jested while he

played, and round him some very young men who appeared to be charmed with his rollicking ways.

That he was winning any one could know from his bursts of wild laughter, and as the young men laughed also heartily, we could judge that they had plenty of money to lose, so could afford to keep their tempers.

Yes it was Captain Coffin, and as we knew him on board his own vessel, with his hair and beard dressed and flowing, a superfine navy suit once more upon his back, and his handsome face and daring eyes flashing like diamonds in the candle-light.

Near by we could see the Chinaman in blue nankeen robe and turned-up wooden-soled boots, with the most benevolent expression upon his smooth face and open brow. He was with the on-lookers, and having a little game of betting on the result of each play. We saw him lose twice and pay up, and only win once while we were there; but whether winning or losing, his expressions never changed, he always smiled blandly and contentedly.

"Where are you going to, boys?" asked a soft voice, while a light hand touched my arm.

I looked round, to see our silent, single passenger standing beside us, dressed in the same rusty black dress which had done service most of the voyage.

"We were thinking of going back to the ship, miss," I replied.

"Will you come with me to church, first?"

"Yes, if you like, miss."

Next moment we were walking along Queen Street with our fellow-passenger.

We entered the first place of worship we came to, by chance as we thought.

There is no chance in creation! We stumble on,

thinking we are going our own way, or groping about without a purpose, and all the while we are led on by a purpose beyond our comprehension.

We were late for church, so had to wait at the door for a few moments while the preacher was finishing the first prayer.

What a man he was who now occupied that platform! As I looked at him, standing up with head thrown back, outspread arms, and closed eyes, in that statuesque spontaneous attitude of supplication, visions of Moses came upon me.

I thought upon the Satanic beauty of the man we had left, and compared his figure and impulsive force with this impetuous vigour. It was as if the Archangel Michael stood before me now, and as if I had left a personation of Lucifer behind.

Both grand men as to stature and strength, both powers—for good and evil.

The one before me was tall, broad-chested, and shapely in the limbs, with a noble head—like Captain Coffin, loud voiced, long bearded, and thick-browed; but there the likeness ended. Captain Coffin was black eyed and swarthy. This man was fair and only sun-tanned, with hair grey and nose large and strong. Afterwards, when he opened his eyes I saw that they were blue and piercing, with the fire of enthusiasm blazing in them, as the fires of unholy desires seemed to be burning in those of the other.

Both men stood apart from all others whom I had ever met in the magnetism which seemed to surround them, a power to draw and charm even the hating.

The Rev. Samuel Wilmore was a missionary on his way from the South Seas to China, who had consented to fill the pulpit for the night; and as he had already

acquired a name for daring and enterprise, the church was crammed to the door.

He was bald-headed, with flowing grey hair at the sides, which mingled with the long grey beard, giving him a monkly appearance as he stood up, which the glasses that he wore helped to keep up. I had not seen monks with spectacles in pictures of the olden times, yet I felt as if these glasses helped to carry out the monastical resemblance.

A man of wild impulse and sudden gusts of passion; for his prayer was a prayer of fire, and when he had finished it, and was giving out the second hymn, his voice sounded weakly, as if the effort had for the time used him up.

When we entered the deacon led us right on to the platform steps, the only sitting room in the church. It was a most conspicuous place, where we were hidden from the pastor, excepting when, in his impulse, he stretched his body half way over the rail; then we seemed to be overshadowed, while all the time we sat facing the congregation.

Still, when the preacher began to speak, I lost sight of the audience and the discomfort of being looked at as strangers, while that organ-voice swelled in its low tones, or pealed out like a clarion, music but without a rasp in it—the rich music of a passionate soul grappling with sin, and fighting manfully and straightforwardly.

He spoke of the heathen as a pioneer of civilization might speak; of their early wants and dangers; of the need of God's grace to their bodies, as well as salvation to their minds; and as he spoke, my heart seemed to rise with his voice, and sob with his sobs, while he told his tale like a man who thinks lightly of

personal danger, yet reveals his own sufferings in the word-pictures which he paints of the sufferings of others.

What a man to follow! what a noble aim! My eyes sparkled with desire to emulate. I forgot all that congregation as he spoke, and sank back with a heavy sigh when he ended, as if a chill wind had come in the midst of a summer day.

As he gave out the last hymn, he bent over to where we sat and said to us,—

"I would like to speak to you after service. Will you stay behind?"

Davis and I both nodded, feeling very hot and confused at the multitude of eyes which were directed towards us. However, we sat while the congregation was filing out. After a pause, the missionary came down our side of the steps, and passed an arm through each of ours (for our black-robed friend had glided away with the rest of the congregation, unperceived by us in our confusion); and, thus linked, he drew us into the vestry.

"You are late arrivals in Brisbane, I see," observed Mr. Wilmore, as he drew off his surplice.

"Yes; we arrived this morning in the *Flying Fox*."

"And at church to-night! That shows that you have been well brought up in the ould counthry."

There was a tenderness in his voice, and a rich intonation of brogue, as he said the old country, which proved him to be an Irishman, although long absent from home.

"You come here with your fresh faces and rosy cheeks, and bring along with you wafts of green fields and mountain streams, which always make me feel

young once more for a little while. Say, where are ye staying to-night?"

We told him that we were returning to the ship.

"Are ye expected particularly to-night?"

"I don't suppose we would be missed if we didn't turn up."

"Sure, then, you'd stay with me to-night, and get acquainted with Mrs. Wilmore; for we will be fellow-travellers together to China, where we are all going."

Mr. Wilmore took us home and introduced us to his wife, a tall, handsome, but pale-faced lady, who had been with him in much of his travels and dangers.

"Arrah! Sam, but isn't he like our little Benny before we lost him?—the same blue eyes and light hair."

Mrs. Wilmore was stroking my head as she spoke, as if I had been a little boy, her own Irish blue eyes moist with unshed tears.

"Ay, Jane, as Benny might have been had he lived in Armagh instead of Lifu."

I now understood the cause of the invitation. I had somehow recalled to the bereaved father not only the old country, but the last of a delicate family, who had succumbed to the unwholesome, mangrove countries, leaving them alone with hungry hearts.

Mr. Wilmore did not attempt to overpower us with his dignity, as one is apt to see such pitiful instances at times, neither did he overload us with Scriptural texts. Cheery and free in all his ways, with a magnetic kindness, which made us speak of our own lives and thoughts, and then just a little touch of grave dignity, as he quietly disentangled the skein, and showed us where to find the right thread of rectitude, and where we had been winding it up all wrong.

Several people dropped in to supper, evidently unexpected guests. These Brisbanites had a free-and-easy way of descending in crowds without warning, and taking pot-luck, which must have been trying to the nerves before new chums got used to it.

Next morning Davis and I were waked up by hearing the voices of Mr. Wilmore and Captain James in the verandah in front of our bed-room. We heard the captain say,—

"All right, Mr. Wilmore; you are welcome to the boys until the ship sails. Only tell them to go down to the stores after breakfast and get the rig-out which I promised them."

"I'll see that they go, captain; when must we be aboard?"

"We'll start at noon on Thursday without fail?"

"You call at most of the ports north, do you not?"

"Some passengers and luggage we drop at Maryborough, Rockhampton, and Bowen; that is the last of our stoppages this side of Hong-Kong. Good morning, sir."

"Good morning, captain."

So we were to stay with this kind new friend for four days. It gave us both an interest in life that we had not before; for here we had found an individuality to admire and follow, without the horror which Captain Coffin inspired us with, even while we admired him most.

My friend Davis had one of the broadest and freest natures in the world, yet he did not make so many friends, or seem to waken the same interest in people, as I did; but, for all that, I never noticed in him the slightest indication of jealousy. Indeed, although I might have been quicker at jumping to conclusions, and perhaps a little more fertile in suggestion, I

considered Davis to be by far more reliable and clearer-sighted than I was. He was content, however, always to follow me, admiring me, and willing to pour out his strength and purpose to help me on; and, instead of becoming sullen by the attention which passed over him, he appeared to be only the prouder of me the more I was admired and himself ignored.

We had always slept together since we had left home, and found a mutual comfort in each other's arms. When thinking upon Davis, I fancy I can appreciate the loves of Jonathan and the poet King of Israel, and that Jonathan was the highest character, because the most unselfish : he freely gave all, asking nothing in return excepting love.

If I do not say much of Davis separate from myself in my reminiscences, it is because I cannot separate him. What I did, he advised and imitated; and if we were apart during the day, we were always together in thought, and as yet never separated at night.

After breakfast we went to the store and got our measures taken for our outfit, after which Mr. Wilmore borrowed three horses, and gave us both a lesson in the art of riding.

Of course, we did not learn to ride in that one lesson, but we were both able to stick on the saddles of our quiet ponies before lunch-time, which was all that our host required, as he wanted to take us on the farewell visits that he intended to make on the Tuesday and Wednesday.

Those pleasant three days we spent riding about the country out to the neighbouring selections, where the settlers always made us welcome.

Sometimes it was to a vineyard, where the newcomer was trying as an experiment what has since

succeeded so well in the Australian colonies, the growing of grapes and making of native wines. What a pleasure it was to pass along those vine-arbours and covered lanes, with the ripening clusters hanging down, and the broad green leaves shading the fierce sun-rays from us.

Sometimes it was a ride through the bush, past the ringed and dying gum-trees, or into gullies as we sought some distant station; guided along our way by the blazed trunks, with many narrow escapes from falling as we rode along. We always liked to gallop best, as we felt easier in the saddle at such times; but oh! the after-effects when we dismounted and attempted to sit upon chairs.

Our host entertained us by the way with botanical, geological, or natural history observations on objects round us, so that each moment which we passed in his society was like a day at college; he spoke always spontaneously and with original touches, but never without a deep and tender meaning, each word pointed with wit or humour, and laden with the knowledge of long years of experience.

As I looked upon his noble features and heard the music of his sonorous voice sinking into my ears, I felt my heart growing larger with new desires and aspirations; everything about him was so manly and healthy, his faith was so reassuring and perfect, his religion so cheerful and so absorbing that everything became merged into it, and grew out again stronger and better for the vivifying contact.

He was like the realized symbol of what I had read of the perfect knight, with a flowing grey beard and an eagle glance; there seemed no terror in the future when beside this Christian warrior, indulgent but

watchful; we spent three days of pleasure such as we had not experienced before; he seemed to have absorbed us like the rest of nature, and was giving our souls back again watered and fresh.

As we passed through the Eucalyptus forest he would stoop in his saddle and gather a handful of the violet-tinted young leaves, with their lovely bloom like a peach or plum.

"Ah, boys, there grows the wealth of Australia, the health-restorer of the world, medicine enough to serve mankind when we grow wise enough out here to cultivate it instead of destroying it like a nuisance. No one need die of thirst if he can find a gum-tree growing; it can cure pain and ague, fever and headache, and until the new chums destroy these benefactors, which purify the air and ward off trouble, Australia cannot harbour an infectious disease.

"That little creeper which you are crushing is the best purifier of blood in the world. Chew it as you go along; it tastes like liquorice, it is called sassafras. With it and a few gum-leaves you may be able to exist, if ever lost in the bush, for a long time without food or water, but if you were to dig under any of these trees you would find as much water as you would require to quench your thirst, no matter how dry the season may be. So you see how God provides for us all wherever we may be placed, if so be that we cultivate the talents He has given to us; it is through ignorance only that we suffer in this life, and the next."

"It is a pity that we had not the instinct of the dog or cat, to know what to avoid and what to take."

"We have instinct for good and for evil if we like to yield to it. Knowledge is only the cultivated substitute for instinct, but we are so clever that we have

learnt to despise the natural gift, and so indolent that we will not take the trouble to acquire its substitute."

On Thursday morning we accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Wilmore to the ship, where all was bustle and preparation to move again.

There were about thirty passengers going on with us, some to Maryborough, others to Rockhampton, and one or two to Bowen. Besides those who had come from England were some other new-comers like Mr. Wilmore, both in saloon and steerage, so that altogether we had about one hundred and fifty passengers going to North Queensland or further.

As we passed along the gangway I was astonished to find Captain Coffin lounging near the midships, giving orders to the men-loaders and superintending the bales, &c., which were being lowered into the hold.

"Hallo, lads, got back once more from the prayer-meeting? You see I am one of you now."

"Is that so, Captain Coffin?"

"I am not captain now, boys, only second here; glad of any chance of getting away from the hole. Here, you lubbers, where are you heaving that bale to? Gently, gently does it, you dashed son of a sea-cook."

Mr. Edward Coffin was once more in his element, bullying and joking at the loaders.

"Is that the first captain you were telling me about?" asked Mr. Wilmore in a low voice as we stood aside.

"Yas, I'm their first skipper; more like a father to them, I should say. Would you, boys?" said Coffin.

We did not feel justified to reply to this.

"Did you want to try on your converting dodge, preacher, for I'm a good subject, I guess."

"I think there is some good in you, Captain Coffin."

"Mr. Coffin, if you please, sir; there is only one captain aboard this *Flying Fox* at present. Well, I rather like being tickled, so as it's not overdone; d'ye smoke?"

"Sometimes."

"Have a cigar?" He pulled out a few from his outside pocket and held them in his hand to Mr. Wilmore.

"Thank you, Mr. Coffin."

Mr. Wilmore took one of the cigars, and, biting the end off, took out a box of matches and prepared to light it.

"Will you have a light?"

"Thank you, parson."

The two men stood up facing one another, while Mr. Coffin took the match from the fingers of Mr. Wilmore. As he took it, however, a slight puff of wind blew it out.

Then, as old travellers will do to whom matches are at times scarce, neither of them thought of lighting a second one, but approached one another as if about to kiss, Mr. Wilmore holding the lighted cigar in his lips and the other the yet unlighted weed.

Of one size, above the ordinary stature of men, both broad-shouldered and clean-cut in their lines, they seemed worthy types of the good and the evil in their perfection of grace; and as they stood for a moment, with the magnetism of the piercing blue eyes blending with the magnetism of the blazing black eyes, they seemed to be linking themselves together in an unseen but severless chain.

"Well, parson, you *are* a *man*, I guess, even though

you are a preacher, whom I'd as soon try my strength with as any man I ever met."

"I will wrestle with you for your soul when you like," responded Mr. Wilmore with a smile.

"No, that wouldn't be fair to you, and I like to do fair with a man who can smoke like a man."

"Why wouldn't it be fair?"

"Because you would have both me and my master, the devil, against you, and that would be long odds."

"Not so, my friend, for I will tackle the devil, and leave you to *my* Master to be conquered."

Both laughed as they turned from each other, Mr. Coffin to attend to the hold and Mr. Wilmore to join the ladies.

"What do you think of him, sir?"

"A devil as yet, my son, or rather a man with seven devils who may be driven out."

We next went to the galley to see the new cook, and were hardly surprised, after seeing Captain Coffin acting as second mate, to find his gambling companion, Ah Lee, the Chinaman, amongst the pots.

"Halloa, John, are you the cook now?"

"Yes, me cookee now, blongy along boald this ship."

"Well, I'm to be your boy," said Davis.

"You boy me, oh I savvy you boy help me washee up dishee."

"Yes," said Davis.

"What you call name?"

"Davis."

"Da-pes; name blongy me Ah Lee."

"Oh, Aly."

And so Ah Lee became Aly all over the ship from that time forward; sometimes they added "slopper"

to it, from the habit he had of slopping along the decks in his shoes, for when we heard that slop-slop step we knew that our cook had nothing to conceal, and wished to make his presence known, although at other times he could glide along with the silence of a spectre; but never without that placid smile upon his lips and that disturbless repose within those almond eyes. He was a good cook, and kept his galley like the deck of a man-of-war, sleeping on a little shelf by the side of the stores, although, by the way, no one on board ever caught him asleep. Yet sometimes he could be seen lying on his back, with his dark eyes fixed on the ceiling, after work was over. A philosopher and worthy disciple of the great Confucius, who took reverses as he took successes, calmly and without emotion.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT BARRIER REEFS.

MR. GRIFFIN was now raised to the post of first mate through the departure of Mr. Lewis. He had passed his time after leaving jail at the same hotel as Mr. and Miss Trefusis. He was a happy young hero, for the father had consented to their engagement, so that he now came to his duties with a purpose, to return to Queensland, if possible, in command of a vessel as Captain Griffin.

Zeno, Hiram and the boatswain returned at the last moment, in such a state of intoxication that I wondered how they had been able to know their own ship from any of the others, and put it down to an instinct peculiar to sailors, for they staggered with bent heads and closed eyes, straight on to the gangway, timing themselves so exactly as to the tide and moment of departure that they put their feet upon the last plank just as it was on the point of being loosed from the ship's side; they lurched past Mr. Griffin equally insensible to his presence or the hearty kicks which he bestowed upon them to help them to the forecastle.

The purser also had been replaced by a stranger—a gaunt, melancholy man, who took the post in order to get away from himself. He was the hero of as

many misfortunes as one could well conceive possible for a luckless mortal to pass through, and yet keep within him any further desire for life.

He was a hero after the Enoch Arden type, without any of the romance with which that unfortunate seafarer has been invested.

As we passed along the quiet seas of the north within the great barrier reef, where there was little to do except to let the gentle zephyrs waft us along, one of the second-cabin passengers told the story to two or three of the men lounging about, he also having been one of the luckless expedition.

This passenger was now proceeding up to Cleveland Bay to start a store, after enjoying a trip to Sydney to see his friends, who had mourned him as dead, and to get a view of his own tombstone.

While he spun his yarn, the purser could be seen sitting over by the forecastle-door with an empty pipe in his lantern jaws, sucking away with the artless vacancy of a baby over its bottle, and seemingly gazing at the stony eye of the staid pelican, who stood over against him upon one leg, and with a motion about the bag under his bill as if he also was sucking at the tube of innocence.

It was curious to note how unlike they were and yet how startling a suggestion of sameness there was about these two profiles. Dark against the mellow sundown glow over by the bows, the tobacco-pipe held in that sad but inane mouth helped out the resemblance of the bill without being in the slightest degree like it; a little tuft of ruffled feathers on the top of the small head of the one was *fac-similied* by the tuft of hair which stood up from the crown of the other; a profile set at an angle of about forty-five, with a large nose, small

close-set eyes and cut-away chin, lower lip hanging away from the upper, and with that expression of foolish melancholy, which was only stupidity in the other.

You looked from the one profile to the other and back again, tracing the likeness stronger as you looked; the pelican was the more pronounced type of the two, the other, perhaps, spoilt a little in the process of development; they were both like pelicans on the housetop and appeared to be mourning for their mates, yet they were not a pair as they stood, except a pair of disconsolates, which somehow no one could pity without laughing at, for while you might blame, you could not wonder at the mates for flying away and leaving them alone on their twilight perch.

"Yes, poor wretch," began the second-cabin passenger, "thus he sits as I have seen him sitting often before amongst the pelicans, as like them as if his father had been the parent of the lot, and he wasn't well treated by his half-brothers; he's not a beauty, and he never had a friend, either amongst men or beasts, for he hasn't a way to get on with anything; he is the most cussedly unlucky duffer any one ever heard about.

"And yet, mind you, I don't suppose there's a more decent fellow going; I never saw him drink more than a glass at a time, he doesn't waste even matches, as you can see at this moment with his pipe, but somehow he never won sympathy in any of his vexations. I believe that one-legged pelican, for all his solemnity, is despising him as a mongrel relation.

"However, to go on with my yarn. A little over two years ago I shipped with him in the *Polly Burns* as supercargo. Our mission was to trade with the natives

for copra and bêche-de-mer, with what else we could pick up, such as curios, tortoise-shell, &c.; but as she was an old craft and not worth the keeping, besides being heavily insured, I don't suppose the owners cared much if they never saw her again—his wife being pretty much of the same opinion as regards her silly nincompoop.

"Well, we had a pretty good voyage, knocking about amongst the islands, and not bad trade either; still, if he hadn't been so mighty conscientious, we might have done better; but at last, one day, we stuck fast on a sand-bank, right out of the track of vessels, without the ghost of a chance of being rescued till doomsday.

"As far as our safety was concerned we were all right, as we were within rowing distance of a thickly wooded island, where we could get lots of fresh water, wild cocoa-nuts and bananas, besides fish and turtles for the lifting. We were well inside the reef and out of reach of rough water, so that all we had to do was lie and sleep while the *Polly Burns* lay and rotted on that sandbank.

"Two or three times during the two years that we lived out of reach of all the world, we tried to persuade the old man to get up a raft or something of the kind, but he was obstinate and would not budge without his ship; he had taken her from Cleveland Bay and he intended taking her home again, so we being young fellows and finding the life easy, did not bother leaving him.

"Meanwhile the owners of the *Polly Burns* and wife of that unfortunate half-pelican waited and waited month after month, until at last, when nearly two years had passed and no word came, they with all the

world gave us up as lost and dead. Nobody was very sorry about either him or the ship, although my friends, I daresay, felt a little about my loss for a time.

"At last, when all hope was given up that we would ever return, the owners applied for the insurance-money and got it without demur; the wife, also, after waiting with tolerable patience for about eighteen months, applied for his life policy amount and got it, for the gomeril, although not made too happy at home, had taken care to leave matters straight for her in case of accident. It was a tidy sum, two thousand five hundred, which the assurance company paid her; with this she spent the next six months in clover as a gay young widow fishing for number two.

"My own friends in Sydney had given me up, worn out their mourning, and done everything respectably by putting up a tombstone in commemoration of my virtues, so that we had been settled as dead and done for all round and had no more right to come back and disturb the peace of our relatives than any man dead and buried has to go and resurrect himself.

"The captain's widow with her two thousand five hundred pounds very soon found a bridegroom, and after dangling him off and on long enough for her own patience, put up the cries in church, spent the most of that death legacy in furnishing a nice house and providing herself with a handsome outfit, making the rest of it fly all round in drinks and presents to her numerous friends and well-wishers.

"At this time, when our absence was making every one so happy and comfortable, as bad luck would have it the *Polly Burns* hoisted herself off that confounded sandbank and once more floated.

"It was just the day before the wedding that we put in our appearance off Magnetic Island, with as crazy a craft as any one could navigate back again; only for the captain's extraordinary energy and ceaseless care, she would have foundered a dozen times, for she was leaking at every seam, and hardly worth the price of old iron and firewood.

"The owners were furious, and dismissed him on the spot, for they had to refund the insurance-money through his stupidity in bringing her home again.

"His wife, now almost as good as married to another man, repudiated him, and stuck to the man she had chosen, half spliced as she was; only she was better off than the owners, for she had spent the insurance-money, so could not refund it.

"The insurance company raved and swore at the unlucky man who had dared to live, and so spoil everything; his former friends passed him by with contempt, as something too utterly base and mean-spirited to speak to.

"I can't say really whether he was ashamed of himself or not, as he always looked as he is looking now; but he came with me down to Brisbane, where I left him to spend the remainder of that two years' screw which his lost wife hadn't seized upon, while I went on to give my friends in Sydney a little surprise.

"It was certainly a surprise which they got, although not a pleasant one, for my coming back again to the world after all their tears, letters of condolence, corner bits of poetry in the newspapers, intimations, mourning clothes worn out, and that accusing tombstone in the cemetery was too much for their patience. My presence renewed painful thoughts and opened sores long since healed; it did worse, for it made them appear ridicu-

lous, so that after the welcome I got from my relations I was glad enough to sneak back again to the old store in Townsville, and hide my head amongst strangers, as I suppose the captain is glad enough also to do, half-pelican though he is.

"One thing it taught me, however, and that was 'that when a man's friends have good cause to consider him dead, he is worse than a fool ever to turn up again.'"

Although we laughed at this second passenger's account of the *Polly Burns*, we all looked with pity towards that silent and unconscious figure silhouetted against the yellow Alexandrine sky, with the long-billed bird over against him, two solitary blotches of purple-grey, with about as much expression in the one as the other.

We did pity him, although somehow none of us could blame the woman who had cast him off; we all felt we would have done the same had we been more closely allied to him than we were. No, they were best left to themselves to think the problem out as they seemed to be doing, in the midst of that blanching obscurity, the man sucking at his half-emptied pipe from which no smoke came to prove that there was life in it or him, the pelican working the bag at his under-bill, with half-closed eyes and drawn up leg.

* * * * *

We sailed from Brisbane along the coast, with a light wind past Double Island Point and through Wide Bay, and inside the channel between the mainland and Great Sandy Island. Up the Mary river, as far as we dared sail with our draughtage, to where a little flat boat met us and into which we discharged what cargo and passengers we had to leave at Maryborough. Then on again through Harvey Bay, past Burnett Head, Port Curtis, Cape Capricorn, and into Kippell Bay, one

of the loveliest points on the coast, with its golden beach and semi-tropical leafage.

The Fitzroy river being large enough for us to sail right up to the new city of Rockhampton, we spent a couple of days unloading and landing our passengers; the most of the steerage passengers left us here, as the town was just beginning to be talked about as a rising city and hints of gold were bringing the diggers.

The city was planned and pegged out in a very extensive style, with wide straight streets, and here and there a house at the corners; young trees were beginning to grow up in East Street, and shops to cluster about the wharves.

"It isn't much of a place yet," observed the captain; "but five years ago when I took up my first batch of settlers it was a mangrove swamp. Would you believe it, they refused to be left, and rose up against us, calling the Government and us murderers as we hauled off from the shore leaving them and their baggage there. Some fired upon us as we sailed away, others lay down in their despair, tearing their hair out by handfuls and cursing us; but I doubt if any of the same lot would leave the place now."

"It takes some time for new chums to get rid of their ideal pictures and be able to grasp the reality; they have to run the gauntlet of a lot of vexations besides mosquitoes," replied Mr. Wilmore.

"You are right, sir; but it is astonishing how fond they get of their adopted country. Now, this little growing town of Rockhampton is one of the few Australian townships which always catches my fancy."

"It has a great future before it I firmly believe, and its founders have cause to be proud of it."

Davis, in his capacity as assistant cook to Aly, had

always a deal of amusing stories to tell me about that worthy, when we turned in to our berths of a night.

He was always so gentle and soft voiced, and often seemed to make fun of himself to please his assistant, smiling in a happy way when he made the others laugh by some of his quaint remarks. His stock of English was very limited and what he had picked up from sailors and diggers, so that it was no uncommon thing for him to garnish his broken pigeon with some very shocking oath now and again, which he would utter in all good faith in the most orthodox company, all unconscious that he was saying anything out of the ordinary mode of polite conversation. His life since leaving Pekin had been one of adventures and vicissitudes; but, like all his countrymen, he had been able to save money where Europeans would have starved. In Melbourne, in one night, he had staked his whole possessions and lost them.

"How much you lose at Fan-tan then, Aly?" asked the boatswain.

Ah Lee held up both hands outspread. "Twice countley fingey hun-tun."

"Two thousand pounds, that was a drop. Were you not mad to lose it, Aly?"

"What fol me madly, had me not game all that same? And what is molley, when me die me no take it? It no blongus any mols," replied Ah Lee, with a cheerful smile.

"What you do next?"

"Me startee logee house for Chinamen, fo, fai shilmey fol bedee dat all, soon me get bigee house where da smokee take place, plenty molley den, white man, white woman all come alongee to get pipe."

"A lodging-house and opium-den."

"Dat so, den de galante lottly."

"The grand lottery."

"An Fan-tan did all de lest, you savvy?"

"And you were a made man again."

"Dat so, Flin?"

"I suppose Fan-tan let you in once more?"

"No, no Fan-tan dis time, me wantlee wifee, so go buyee flom Yeng-leng dam man."

"Yes, Aly, you buy the Englishman's daughter from him."

"Me wantche to, but he sell me with him own wifee."

"Well, so long as he was pleased, Aly, to let you have his wife, I suppose you were?"

"Ah, yes, belee pleased; till detective comee alongee and took me uply for lobling him!"

"Oh! it was a plant, and they gave you in charge for abduction."

"Dat what judge call it, and he givey me siksye month in chokee, while de dam hasyeman takey back him wife and all my molley, while I pickey oklum."

"That was hard lines for you, Aly; and I suppose you started afresh."

"Ah! yes, but me no gleen Chinaman any mole altery dat siksye month oklum pickee, me makey molley and losey molley all same; but no chilo laughee any mole, it all fail play now."

He trod the deck with an unconscious air and a serene smile, and no one thought anything of Aly.

Hiram, Zeno, the boatswain, and Mr. Coffin used to chum of a night when off their watch, and play cards in the deck-house; while Mr. Griffin kept himself apart from them, now that he was transferred to the cabin occupied in former times by Mr. Lewis. Mr. Griffin and Mr. Coffin did not appear to get on with one another, Mr. Coffin with great difficulty curbing

his diabolical and over-bearing temper when the other was near him, and never throwing away a chance to sneer at the young fellow as a milk-sop, because he would not join in these deck-house games. But Ah Lee wasn't so shy, and seemed ever ready to make a fourth if one of them chanced to be called away.

We were now within the great barrier reef, which extends from Keppel Bay right up the extent of Northern Queensland, sailing along quiet seas, within sight of land all the way, and never losing the view of that wonderful country, as yet untrodden by white men. During this time I was much made of by Mr. and Mrs. Wilmore, with little to do except listen to his exhaustless store of knowledge about the land we were passing, with its geological and historical points of interest.

I had always an hour or two to spare between meal-times, and it was then that this great-hearted man took to enlighten my darkness and improve my knowledge of the world. He had passed his degrees as a doctor, not as Mr. Allan Sleigher had done, but thoroughly, although he had adopted the homeopathic system, which the allopathic profession so often ridicule.

When it was Mr. Coffin's watch on deck, I often heard the two discuss questions of religion. Mr. Coffin professed to be an atheist, having read many pamphlets on the subject, and spoke as he had read with a strong assumption of superiority and pity for the weakness of any one who could believe in the existence of a God.

I used to stand by and listen to the arguments when the two strong men met on the poop. Mr. Coffin quoted from the books he had read, I heard the names of many old professors of logic mentioned, chiefly by

the atheist; he raved about Confucius, the predecessor of Christ, Gautama, Plato, Socrates, indeed he seemed to have a long list of names to batter at the other, and hosts of conclusions which were not his own, and I marvelled where he had picked them all up; but Mr. Wilmore used to dismiss them all with a word, and turn to the living evidences of nature as supporters of his reasons for belief. Mr. Wilmore always replied cheerfully, with a twinkle in his shrewd blue eyes; but the other used to lose his temper and swear some awful oaths before he stalked away, with his black eyes blazing and his brow like scarlet.

"Suppose you are right," said Mr. Wilmore on these occasions, "is the world any better?"

"I don't say it is," growled Mr. Coffin.

"But suppose we are right, where are you?"

Then Mr. Coffin lost his temper and swore.

"But you are not right."

"Are you right?"

"I don't know, but I think so."

"Ah! there you are you see, you think you are right, because many have said so. I feel I am right, when I look round me, and because I find it peace to feel so; if you are right and I am wrong I won't be any the worse for my faith, but if I am right and you are wrong, then I have won eternal life and you have lost it. Ay! swear if you like, Mr. Coffin; but I think we Christians have the best of the bargain whichever way you take it."

Then Mr. Coffin would go away blaspheming in an incoherent manner.

I used also to notice when Mrs. Wilmore was on deck that Mr. Coffin did not swear now so much as he used to do at first; he would follow her with his bold eyes

when she walked to and fro, with a kind of a sheepish awkwardness when she spoke to him, and a horrid glare which seemed to encompass her graceful figure when her back was turned upon him; he appeared on these times like a tiger about to spring upon her, but cowed every time she looked at him into temporary submission. As we advanced upon our journey I could see this gloating expression more often upon his face when he thought no one saw it, while the friendly, half-mocking look, with which he used at first to greet Mr. Wilmore, slowly turned to a jealous hatred whenever they now met. The discussions became more aggressive and personal, also with more blasphemy and less reason on Coffin's part; while sometimes I could see the old devil-face, which I used to shudder at, whenever he saw the husband and wife together like a perfect pair.

"What a splendid-looking man that second mate is," observed Mrs. Wilmore to the captain.

"Yes, he is an able sailor, although he knows nothing of this coast."

"Yet he makes me shudder when he is near me."

"You ladies are gifted with strong imaginations; all I care about is to have good and obedient subordinates about me, and I have as yet had no cause to find fault with him."

We got rid of our last passengers, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Wilmore, at Port Denison; after that there were no more stoppages, for Cooktown was not yet named.

All wild country, from Townsville up to the Torres Straits, with only savages of the lowest and worst types occupying it.

We passed high ranges, verging from bronzy green

with deep velvety shadows, through the gradations of purple to faint and swimming blue, like a mirage against the rolling white clouds.

No rain fell, although the sky in this northern sphere was for ever filled with rain-clouds. A dry land, parched with thirst, with the full-breasted clouds ever ready to pour down their life-giving benefits, only waiting on what?

"It always looks like rain here during the driest seasons," observed the captain to Mr. Wilmore. "Now, in any other part of the world I would consider, from my weather experience, that these were rain-clouds, swollen to the bursting, in fact. Why then do they not break?"

"They are waiting on the white fellow" replied Mr. Wilmore. "Do you not see the heat exhalations from the soil repels them and floats them away like balloons; they must burst in time, but it is over the sea that they pour their condensed fluid, not on the land. There are not forests enough to attract rain in this northern land; we want higher hills, and in lieu of that more trees."

"But the squatters and settlers in the south—New South Wales, and Victoria—are clearing away as fast as they can."

"That is a grand mistake which time will show them the folly of; the gum-tree has the power of attracting rain more than any other tree, and that is why it is placed by nature in Australia, but they can accustom the clouds to break here if they will. Gunpowder charges and explosives, that is what we require now until the land is peopled and cultivated, then the country will have all that it requires."

"You have faith in this country then?"

"Unbounded faith in the future of Australia, an

particularly in this northern portion of it. It is rich and fertile, the soil waits but to be griped to teem with life. Let England pour out her thousands and hundreds of thousands, nay, let all the nations of the world contribute humanity to this idle land, she can take them and more; no land can furnish sons and daughters enough to satisfy the cravings of this unsatisfied land."

"But there are hundreds of unemployed in Brisbane."

"Yes, in the cities; but that is not the land. Let them distribute and learn to rough it for a time, ease and comfort will come: let them learn from the ancient Egyptians and dig canals, and build tanks to preserve the water which they get at times, underground tanks, like the great tanks of India, until they eventually learn the secret how to utilize these floating tanks of water overhead."

We passed Cape Tribulation, with the grandly abrupt peak called Peter-Botte, towering from rolling grey clouds. No lack of water about this part, where the mountains, rugged and stupendous as the Alps of Switzerland, were high enough to pierce those rounded bosoms, and draw them down to their valleys; the vegetation here was green and exotic, broad fan-shaped leaves stretching out from long straight stalks, with the silver gleamings of rushing mountain-torrents.

"How suggestive the names are hereabouts, telling us how the great explorer Cook grew weary of his long unceasing monotony day after day inside this barrier, which must have seemed to him without a termination. Cape Desolation, where the life seemed dreary; Weary Bay, as they crawled along with the waving plains of grey grass ashore; Hope Island, where a break to seaward showed them that there might be a way to escape from the depressions of ever-

lasting slumbering seas; Endeavour Reef, where the vessel struck on the coral and was like to go under; The River, now Cooktown, where they lay to and repaired damages before continuing their dreary voyage of discovery.

"We know the lie of the land now; but what must it have been to this noble first rover with everything to find out," continued Mr. Wilmore, in one of his many pleasant discourses on deck. "We can always separate Captain Cook's titles from those of all others, for they come from his heart straight, and tell us like an epitome his own feelings: Cape Flattery, when he rose up and fancied he saw the end of this weary land; Cape *Look-out*, when he could stand no more of it, but only waited upon any chance to get out from these nautilus-haunted, emerald-tinted, mocking prison waters to the deep blue bounding ocean, where, if no other change, they had some heaving and felt that they were at sea and not in a tub."

Sometimes, as we glided along this placid sea, we saw the white columns of smoke rising from the camp-fires of the aborigines ashore; at other times, groups of black figures waved their arms and weapons with defiance as we passed; at Cape Melville, we saw the stones piled up and thrown down one on the top of the other as if giants had been amusing themselves putting.

Not much change counting hour by hour, for we crept very slowly on our journey, yet still an alteration in the character of the scenery day after day. To seaward we could see the dark ocean, rough and turbulent, and the white uprearing of the foam as the waves broke themselves against the upright coral-walls, which protected us from the changes outside.

We had storm effects also, although it felt like

watching a gale from the land, for the waves at their roughest never rose above our lowest port-holes, yet we could see that ocean lashing and foaming outside in a white fury against the dark lightning-charged clouds; we felt the wind whistle through our shrouds and urge us forward at a faster rate, and could listen to the wild thunder-claps, and see the forked flashes play about the masts, but no rain fell; it was a dry display of fireworks amid a roaring artillery, while we passed along the running wavelets as if in harbour.

Fair weather or foul, we were nearing the north end of Queensland, and would soon be free of the land and on our way.

Our Captain James, when sober, as he had been now since his Sleigher bout, was not a very sociable character. He was a man of few words, not interfering much with the arrangement of the ship unless especially wanted, so that as his watch was the same as Mr. Coffin's he left the other pretty much to himself.

Many of our sailors had deserted at Brisbane, and I noticed that the vacancies filled up were mostly men who served in Mr. Coffin's watch. Whether he had suggested them or not I could not say, being absent when they were shipped, but they were a dark-bearded, evil-eyed set of men, who might have been hung for pirates had their countenances been the evidence.

Still they were obedient to him, and having little to do and being fairly served as to provisions, they seemed satisfied with their condition.

When Mrs. Wilmore came on deck during Mr. Coffin's watch, he appeared to forget the ship and look only at her. Sometimes they spoke together; that is, she asked him a few questions which he answered in a confused way, letting her go from him as if he was

glad to be released from her society, yet watching her with a wolfish, furtive eye as she walked from him, as if he could have leapt upon her and devoured her. I think that he was more constrained beside her than ever I thought it possible for this stalwart, reckless man to be before any one.

One night, as I was carrying in the dishes to supper, (next day we expected to see Cape York, for we were then going through Albany Pass,) Ah Lee took the last dish from me, saying gently,—

"Me take dis lilley one to cabin, tell Davis to come also."

Davis and I followed at his heels.

It was Mr. Coffin's watch below, so that he was not at the table this meal.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilmore with Mr. Griffin only were seated, when Ah Lee smilingly entered with his load and set it down.

"Well, Aly, what is going on to-night that you consent to serve the cabin?"

"Supposey you sittey toppee side on mine 'bout to bust, what do you next?" inquired Ah Lee, standing upright, with arms akimbo.

"Run away double quick," said Mr. Griffin.

"But supposey you no can lun away?"

"Then we try to put it out."

"Jes so, Davis, shut the door."

Davis ran to shut the saloon door, and when it was fast Ah Lee continued,—

"Da' is de mine going to explody wight abold, Massil Coffin will be skippel and the oddel logues all lise up and kill all de list."

"Is that so, Ali?"

"Dat so!"

"When is this attack to take place?"

"Fou'ly bell to-night."

"And it is seven o'clock now; well, we must look alive. Have they got arms, Ali?"

"Not much, me took cale of the powdel, it belly muchay dampel."

It had come upon us like a thunder-clap, this threatened insubordination, and as yet we had only Ah Lee's word for it.

Mr. Griffin continued to question him.

"How do you know all this, Aly?"

"Me playee calds, and no one takes no notice of Chineeman, he no dam good. Well, as you say, me heal all 'bout it. Massil Coffin's tiled of being second mate, he no want to go Hong-Kong, he want to go to New Guinea and huntee for blackbilds."

"Oh! they want to turn the *Flying Fox* into a black trader, do they?"

"Yes, Massl Gliffin."

"But why didn't you join them, Aly?" asked the first mate suspiciously, for he wasn't sure how far to trust this bland-faced celestial.

"Me been to New Guinea, and no wantche go again."

"What, do you mean to say you have been ashore in New Guinea?" asked Mr. Wilmore, who had suddenly roused himself after patiently listening to the foregoing conversation.

"Belly muchly ashole in New Guinea," replied Ah Lee, looking round to his questioner with a gentle air.

"Where have you not been, Aly?" asked Mr. Griffin, with a laugh.

"Me no yet been to Ying-ling," gravely retorted the Chinaman.

"What were *you* doing in New Guinea?" again asked Mr. Wilmore.

"Me no thele as cookee you bet, they like Chineeman belly muchly bettel than dat, me kept thele for glub."

"Oh! they meant to eat you."

"Dat so, you go on with suppel, and me tell you all 'bout it, plenty much time before fou'ly bells to look out fol Massal Coffin."

It was with anxious faces that they settled down to supper, while Ah Lee, taking up his position at the door of the saloon, which Davis had shut, continued his story, his tall, powerful-looking figure leaning carelessly against one of the posts, and his hand waving gently through the air as he spoke.

"Dat seems raddel stlong dlaught to-nightly flom de skylight, 'xcuse me while I shutly up."

Ah Lee glided softly out as he spoke, and a moment afterwards we heard the windows put down and the tarpaulin cover drawn over them, after which he returned dragging along with him one of the new men, a black-eyed, sallow-faced, half-Malay, half-Frenchman.

"One ob the conspilatoes," he observed, as he proceeded to tie him up with a rope, which he had brought along with him from the poop.

"Me not like outsidely listenels when me tell my stoly. Dele you lie downly till I finishly."

He flung down the man, and bound him firmly upon the floor at his feet as he spoke, planting one wooden shoe lightly upon his body. The seaman did not speak through it all, but seemed to accept his fate as a matter of course.

"Had we not better secure Mr. Coffin also?" asked Mr. Wilmore at this point,

"No needly, Mr. Coffin too much fly—see," Ah Lee

threw open the door of Mr. Coffin's cabin and showed them that it was empty.

"He in deckly house, getting all leady, no feal, plenty muchly time to befols dey come, me know all 'bout it.

"Fively yeals ago, I left Hong-Kong with oddel two hun-tun of my counlymen; we wele all boun' to Sydney;—it was a dalkly night when we lan ashols and the shiply went down.

"We all got on to de land, howebel, while de capin and eightly of de clew left us to go to seekly help.

"Nextly molning the natives came down and dlove us up like sheepee, when dey saw it was Chineeman dey look mightly please, for dey say we all belly good, bettel den pig, the foul sailo's left dey knockly on de head and pitch into de watel, fol dey say dey no good, too much smelly of salt and koko.

"Fol ten monthly dey keep us like fightly cocks on de besty ob the island. De' we wele insidely of a big temple all chained togeddel and well looked aftel, only no one let out except one at a time, who nebel come back to tell de talee.

"I was de thinnest Chilo, so dey left me to de las to fatten, taking one or two ob de fatest ebely day, and making belly melly obel de feast."

"Were you not horribly afraid as you saw your companions being cleared out in this way?" asked Mr. Wilmore.

"Not belly, fol I was so thinly, all bones and no beef; dey used to feel me obel sometimes, and den fling me down wid angly faces, den I knew they would leave me to de last.

"Ebely molning de chief and some of his youngly men came in to see us eat, and dat we did not miss

our glub. I would pletend to eat all my might, but always gave my shae to some one else who didn't mind being fat.

"Des went on some time, and twenty-eight of us well fist taken, and ebely day we used to watchly the chosely ones malched out, and heal dem squeak when dey got de knifely, after which we knew dat we could sleep till to-mollow."

"How could you sleep at such a time?"

"We', we nealel to death den as now, ol as ebely day? What fol we mouln befol oul time?"

Ah Lee looked round simply as he uttered this sentiment, a benign contentment upon his face.

"If dey eat me dele, me no needly to go to Sydnay, dat all.

"Bymby we wele all done but two besidely myself, den we got to look outly, it was de las day fol two ob us, the las day but one fol de thild, as lately dey had been saving up del meat, and not using mole den two at a time.

"Next day they took my muddel's cousin, Ting Lee, leaving de oddel man an me to think who would be the las left.

"A solemn thought, genlemen, whichly ob us was to be de next dinnel, and how it was likely to be cooked.

"Dat de ting hulty my feelees mosly, fol dem savages got no taste, dey belly well pleased with Chineeman as he was, he belly sweet done plainly, but all they no got the blains to know how muchly mole nicely he taste if cooked nicely; it look so like a waste of good dinnels.

"De oddel man's tuln came nextly day, den I know dey would have to eat me, so I sent for de chief and say I wantche speak to him.

"I could say something by this time in their tongue, so I ask him how he mean to cook me to-mollow.

"'Loasty,' he replied.

"'Loasty whole?'

"'Yes.'

"'No stuffly?'

"No; boddel stuffly! You tastey 'nough without stuffy.'

"'Dat bad,' say I; 'loasty no good without stuffly. Me know exactly how to do it.'

"'How would you do?' asked the chief, interested.

"'Me know jes whatchly to eat to-day give me nicely flavoul to-mollow.'

"The chief went away without saying muchly, but he must have thought it obel, for in the aftelnoon my dool was opened and five young men came in, with their speals in their hands.

"'Gleat king wantche you go eat something make you taste nicely-nicely to-mollow.'

"I took dem downey to de sea and walky along de beachy, stooping down nowey and denly to pletend I was eating. I meantly to make a lun as soon as I got the chancely, so keep my eyes all loun'.

"Presently what do I see but a shipey coming on. I gave a shout and lan off as fast as I could, waving my alms about and dodging to light and left to escape from the speals.

"One got into my backey and two into my legs, only I could lun fastel den de boys; and dey saw me flom the ship, fol dey filed deil shooting guns amongst the boys and scatteled them jes as I was falling.

"It was the capin and clew coming back to sabe us, genlemen, so dat I had no need to stuffly myself fol to-mollow's dinnel."

Ah Lee finished about the time we had moved the last dish; then as they all rose from their chairs he observed blandly,—

"Hope you habe enjoyed your dinnel, genlemen?"

"Yes, Aly, very much."

"Hopely so, fol you won't get any mole cooked; we must lock dem out to-night."

"Are you one of us, Aly?" asked Mr. Griffin.

"Ce'tilly. Me no wantche to go seeking blackbilds in New Guinea, dey too fond of my kind."

"How many of the men do you think we can command?"

"Fiveley; but dey will be locked in the folecastle."

"How about the purser?"

"He all light; fight fol him duty—got no oddel notion in him headly."

"Then go and fetch him here, and the other men you can depend upon, if you can; bring them along. We have plenty of arms and ammunition here, and can command the skylights from the companion-way door, also get a clear sweep of the deck from the second cabin. Come, you boys, let us reconnoitre while the cook goes forward. They cannot starve us out, for we have the stores all under lock and key this end."

Ah Lee passed out, leaving his prisoner behind, while we went over the first and second saloons, locking up doors and looking to the fastenings of the entrances. When we had all these secured, Mr. Griffin woke up the captain and told him the state of affairs. The old man raved, and wanted to go out to them, but Mr. Wilmore and the first mate begged him for the present to keep quiet.

"We have no direct proof yet whether Ah Lee is right or not. Let us wait and be sure."

So they got out their weapons—pistols, rifles, and cutlasses—along with the powder and balls kept always on board.

"They have nothing to attack us with, so we are safe, and can starve them out, if Mrs. Wilmore can stand hard lines and dry tack for a bit."

Mr. Wilmore looked fondly at his wife, who responded with a quiet, but reassuring smile.

"That's all right; so let them come when they like; we are ready. They thought, I suppose, to catch us asleep; let them think so still."

It was now pitch dark outside, and three bells of the dog watch had rung out. Another half hour was before us and the contest with those awful three—Mr. Coffin, Hiram, and Zeno—who did not know what fear was.

I shuddered as I recalled their deeds in the past. Had we the ghost of a chance against them? Ah Lee was strong and active, but he was a lover of peace; Mr. Wilmore had strength enough to cope with the strongest, but would he fight, if it came to that? I looked round at him, to see that he was sitting near the lamp with his Bible in his hand, reading, while his graceful partner leaned over his shoulder, looking on and reading with him.

Would this messenger of good-will to man leave us in the lurch when it came to hard blows? Before him lay a brace of double-barrelled revolvers, which I had seen Mrs. Wilmore load with quite a professional air, and I felt hopeful, for I noticed that as he turned over the leaves with one hand his other finger was feeling the edge of a cutlass.

Just at that moment four bells rang out,

One, two, three, four!—

A pause. Listen! Were they coming?

Five, six, seven, eight!

Again eight bells, as we had heard it twice before. Did it mean hope or despair?

At that moment Ah Lee glided in, calmly and cheerfully.

"Some one must have ingly the wong timely. Here is de pusser."

Ay, there stood the purser, with the same vacant look on his face as we had seen before. But for all that he seemed to comprehend why he had been sent for, for he stepped to the table, and lifting up a pistol, said in a croaking voice,—

"Loaded?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Wilmore, "I saw to that."

"All right." He turned his back upon the company and went over to Mr. Griffin. "If you have such a thing as a rifle, I'll look after the companion-way."

CHAPTER VIII.

SEEKING BLACKBIRDS.

IT was an anxious moment after that bell rang, and while we waited on the assault.

If Coffin was the leader, it was more in accordance with the reckless bravado of his character to come at us openly rather than sneak upon us in a treacherous manner.

Either mode of warfare might be expected from Hiram Coster and Zeno Levy, for they were both bold and cunning, yet they would be as ready to make a rush with him in the open as to steal upon us and murder us in our sleep.

As four bells, that is the end of the dog watch, was the hour appointed when we might all be expected to be awake and lively, we concluded that Mr. Edward Coffin meant to enjoy himself with an open battle, sure, as he was, in the strength of his party.

As we waited I thought with a vague uneasiness upon the mysterious ringing of the eight bells instead of four; for sailors seldom make such a mistake as to time, which means a lot to those who are taking their snatch of sleep—yet I remembered that twice before, when I had heard it rolled out with the same distinctness, whether rightly or wrongly, the sounds had been followed by disaster.

Eight bells—or the end of the count. Time always began again after that hour had sounded. Were we ending a crisis of our lives?

"Lookee out; Massal Coffin is coming aftlee," whispered Ah Lee from his point of observation at the second cabin door. "Massal Coffin and a clowdee behind him."

While he yet whispered a smash came to the door. Evidently Captain Edward had his own spies on board, and knew that we were prepared for him, so that there need be no further disguise in the matter.

I noticed that Captain Coffin could be cunning at times, but his natural inclination was to open effrontery.

"Ahoy! there, inside!" he shouted, in his old boisterous voice, with the rasp as of a saw being sharpened on a file in it.

"Well, what do you want?" This reply came from the captain, who walked over to where Ah Lee stood.

"I want you to cave in, and not interfere with this ship, of which I am captain by universal choice. We ain't going to Hong-Kong this voyage, but we are willing to put all who won't join our expedition on to Thursday Island, where they may hail some passing ship afore long."

"But you are not yet master of the ship, Mr. Coffin."

"I am captain by choice of the forecastle, which is the majority, so that you had best give way with a good grace; you are in the minority in this saloon."

"And suppose we decide not to give way, what then?"

"Then, captain, we will take you to the New Guinea coast, and land you amongst the savages. Make up

your minds. I don't want any blood shed, but the *Flying Fox* is mine."

"The forecastle and main-deck, you mean."

"The steering portion, if you please, Captain James."

"So be it, I hold the store-room with the provisions and the ammunition."

"Yes, till we force you out."

"Retire, Mr. Coffin; you shall have our reply in half an hour."

"Half an hour be it; we are rounding Cape York now, and will be at Thursday Island before daybreak."

Mr. Coffin retired with his crew of buccaneers, amongst whom I noticed, as they passed the mainmast lantern, the *bold* form of Jabez Carter, who had chosen to stick by the majority as usual.

I have omitted to speak of the brave Jabez before now, because he had fallen into the common rank as completely as a sensational public debater is apt to get lost sight of when they make a member of Parliament of him; we were strangers almost to one another since leaving Brisbane.

We were decidedly in the minority in the saloon, even counting the five sailors who were now separated from us by the main body of mutineers—seven against thirty, and two of the seven were boys, with another a fragile woman. Still, unless they burst open the door, we could hold them by our firearms, and the stores, for they must get at us before they could get another meal; we, on the other hand, could get no cooking done without their permission.

Thus we were placed, prisoners in the saloon, holding the provisions and firearms, while our captain held the ship and water; we had plenty to eat and drink in

the form of cooked meat and biscuits, with beer, wines and spirits; by their numbers they could keep us prisoners, but we could eventually starve them into submission.

In the council of war which took place during the half hour of grace, Captain James, Mr. Griffin, and Mr. Wilmore, were spokesmen, for Ah Lee looked on quietly, while the purser sat down and seemingly forgot everything.

"I say let us hold on, they must submit after a day or so," said Captain James.

"We all agree that this is the best course. What is your opinion, purser?"

"Stick to our posts of course," croaked the unlucky pelican.

Ah Lee, when asked his opinion, lifted up the Persian cat, which had been shut with us in the cabin, and placing her upon the table, solemnly poured out a cup of tea from the tea-pot, without milk or sugar, and set it before the cat, as if he was offering a sacrifice to one of his gods.

We all watched the movements of Ah Lee and the cat. Ah Lee from his loose trousers pocket next took a pack of cards, and, selecting three aces, the ace of hearts, the ace of spades, and the ace of diamonds, spread them out beside the cup.

Pussy looked on with great interest while Ah Lee did this; then slowly pacing round the cup, she twice whisked her large tail into it, sending a ruby spray over the table-cloth.

"Belly good," murmured Ah Lee, looking on with folded hands.

Puss now looked steadfastly at the three aces as if she was reading something in them, then suddenly

scratched at the black one with her claw, tossing it on to the floor, and finished up her incantation by seeming to dance up and down with her forepaws upon the two remaining aces.

"Belly, belly much goodal, me say also stickly to oul possly."

Ah Lee quite satisfied, seemingly, in his mind, picked up the three aces, and, shuffling his pack with adroit fingers, once more dropped it into his trousers pocket.

"If the cat has decided it that way, Ah Lee, then we are all agreed, I suppose," observed Mr. Wilmore, with a wink in his eye.

"Yes, sah, pussy say we ale all light."

"What awful nonsense!" said Mr. Griffin.

"Not so!" observed Mr. Wilmore gravely, even while his wife smiled upon the performance; "Shakespeare wasn't far out, in my idea, when he wrote, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy,'" so in spite of all that reason and common sense urge to the contrary, I cannot ridicule all the superstitious rites of the heathen; besides, the cat was one of the most sacred of all the Egyptian animal gods, and the Egyptians were the first amongst earth races to discover science, as they displayed in their political systems the greatest amount of wisdom and common sense. Good cat, you look as if you understood me."

Surely enough the cat had been gazing on Mr. Wilmore with steadfast eyes while he was speaking, and now seemed to show her appreciation of the praise bestowed upon her kind by springing from the table to the breast of the missionary, where she clung, purring and rubbing her little mouth against his face with a short sharp 'me-ew' of feline approval.

"Time's up, skipper!" shouted the voice of Coffin from the outside. "What is your decision?"

"To starve you into submission," replied the captain sternly.

"Is that the general voice of the saloon?"

"It is; and what is more, we are all armed inside, and warn you that we will shoot down whoever crosses our range," answered the captain.

"Then, boys," said Coffin, "let us take possession without further parley. Ready?"

A sudden rush, and a united bang at the door, which shook, but did not give way. At the same moment a couple of yells rose up from the compact body outside, while two sharp reports rang out, filling the lobby with smoke. Ah Lee and the purser had opened the battle.

"I am shot, by Saul!" shouted the stentorian voice of Hiram Coster, while a series of piercing screams came from the lips of Jabez.

"Oh, my leg, my leg is broken."

It was all darkness outside, so that we could not see our assailants, only we could hear them pick up the wounded pair, and with deep oaths bear them away.

"I hopely we hab not hultly them too muchly, I able to file bettel by daylightly."

We were troubled no more that night, but next morning by day-dawn, through the port-holes, we could see no land, while the vessel appeared to be tacking, from the orders and trampling overhead of the seamen, as they ran about shifting the yards.

Ah Lee with the aid of a small spirit stove which Mr. Wilmore carried in his dressing-case, and with a bottle of brandy to feed the lamp, managed to boil the coffee, which, with some biscuit and cold pressed meat,

made a fairly good breakfast, although to do so he had used up the contents of the saloon filter.

Meantime we had strengthened our barricade, and were waiting on another attack from the mutineers, but to our surprise they left us alone until after breakfast, when Mr. Coffin came alone.

"Ahoy in there, d'ye hear me?"

"Yes," replied the captain.

"Well, we want no more bloodshed, on board this craft, which is now on her way to New Guinea; our butcher has got a bullet in his ribs, while the yungkling Jabez has got his leg broken, so if ye agree to call a truce, and let Mr. Wilmore bind up the wounds, we will take care that no harm comes to him."

"Yes, I'll go willingly, misguided man," said Mr. Wilmore.

"We will want a hostage till he returns," said the captain at this point interrupting Mr. Wilmore.

"Well, I'll be hostage if you like, captain," said Coffin.

"No, Mr. Coffin," replied Mr. Wilmore, "I am not afraid to trust myself with you; and if I can be of service to the wounded men, I will go at once."

Mr. Wilmore took from his cabin his case of surgical instruments, his wife not objecting in the slightest to his going.

"Are you not afraid of him going?" asked the captain, surprised at her calmness.

"Not in the least, for I feel that he is quite safe. Sure, does he look like a man who could be easily cowed?"

She gazed with loving pride on the manly proportions as he stood at the door waiting upon Ah Lee to open it for him.

About half an hour afterwards he returned, telling us

that he had extracted the bullet from the side of Hiram, and set Jabez' broken limb; also with the information that the five sailors who had refused to join the insurrection were now confined in the deck-house, ironed, and under guard, and that the men had no food at all.

We were now tacking with a breeze blowing on the beam from the south-east, and going through the same coral waters, and although out of sight of the main land, passing islands here and there, on some we saw crowds of natives, while others were only forming, looking like thin yellow strips of sand, shining above the rich blue waves, and here and there a thin trace of vegetation.

We saw on these young unformed islands, lines of white, brown-billed pelicans, sitting digesting their last meal, like solemn over-fed aldermen.

The purser, who sat by one of the windows, and who knew the part well, as it had been the scene of his luckless adventures in the *Polly Burns*, gave them names as we passed.

It was now becoming intensely hot in the stuffy saloon, and we longed not so much for food as water; it was near the end of the dry simoon, and any day we might look for the wind to change to the west, but just now neither beer nor claret sufficed for the lack of that precious boon, water, so that we were more than delighted when, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Edward Coffin came once more with a message from the forecastle—they were desperately hungry, as we were as desperately thirsty, and offered a fair exchange, water for food.

After a consultation, it was decided that we should serve out a day's provisions for a day's allowance of

water, provided that the five friendly seamen were allowed to join us in the saloon.

There was nothing exciting about this mutiny and capture of the ship to Davis and myself; the necessities of both parties were too nearly equalized; in fact, if anything, we had the worst of it, as we found, after the first forenoon, that we could not live without water, and as they gave us no provocation to resort to further violence after that first attack, contenting themselves with steering the ship and leaving us in that inglorious state of inactivity below, we were glad enough to listen to Mr. Wilmore's discourses and pass the time as best we could, looking out of the portholes at the smooth waters around us, or the distant islands which occasionally loomed into view.

On the second day of our journey along the quiet seas, and after arrangements had been made so that Ah Lee and Davis were allowed once more to take possession of the caboose and cook for cabin and forecastle as before, while we received our dishes through the half-opened door, and opened up to them at night. On this day Mr. Wilmore took New Guinea and its history as his subject.

"It has long been my desire to investigate this country, so I am quite prepared to take advantage of this chance of seeing it."

"You will not object to land there, then, if they give us a choice?" asked the captain.

"Not at all; I would like to learn the domestic habits of a people whom we know so little about at present, and, if possible, plant the nucleus of a future mission station amongst them."

"But the danger, and your wife?" said the captain.

"Mrs. Wilmore has with me passed the last ten

years of our united lives in the midst of constant danger, and amongst savages as ferocious as they can be, and still we live to tell the tale."

"We are all in God's hands, I believe," responded the captain.

"That is so, and I believe firmly that no matter where we are, we shall not die an hour before our appointed time."

"Will you tell us what you know about this country, Mr. Wilmore?" I asked, filled with a curiosity to know about the land and people towards which we were tending.

"I will tell you what I know, although that is little beyond the meagre histories, half real, half mythical, for as yet New Guinea is a land of mystery."

We settled ourselves about him to listen, Mr. Griffin and the purser smoking, for Mrs. Wilmore said she liked the smell of tobacco, and as they could not get up to deck, discipline had to be ignored. The five seamen likewise sat near by, contentedly sucking at their well-blackened clays, for they felt on the right side, and need fear no consequences if we escaped, and to them it looked like a holiday; sailors, happily, do not look much beyond the present hour.

"We know that New Guinea is an island, the largest island in the world," began Mr. Wilmore, "sitting on the map like some ungainly dragon, with distended paunch, abbreviated tail, outstretching neck, and gaping jaws, as if it meant to reach up and swallow the many islands which lie scattered about.

"A dragon with serrated backbone and legs crouching up under it, ready for the spring. From nose to tail end, it is about 1400 miles in length, and from backbone to stomach 410 miles in breadth.

"Where we are now passing is about its widest point, that is from Daude to Humboldt Bay, taking in the line with Cape York."

Mr. Wilmore here took out his pencil, and drew in rough outlines what looked like a very strange monster indeed.

"On a line with the snout end, which is called Cape Sele, run the Afrak Mountains, and from them the Krabra river, which flows into the Samei Bay, the base of that ugly lip; Berau Inlet is the open mouth, with Onin for the under jaw and Koemawa for the chin.

"About the arching neck and humped shoulders is the great curve called Geelvink Bay. For neck bones we have the Charles Louis Mountains, the highest range in the island, averaging from 8858 to 16,730 feet in height, nearly 1000 feet higher than Mont Blanc, so stupendous and rugged, as are all the New Guinea hills, as to be said to be inaccessible.

"This fore part from Humboldt Bay, is only half claimed, and without right, by the Dutch, while the rest may be called no man's land, although often taken possession of by different explorers in the name of their different countries.

"Along the haunch of this strange beast extends a range of mountains, which may be called the Owen Stanley Range, Mount Owen Stanley being the highest, and roughly reckoned at 13,200 feet, this range continues in varying heights from opposite Humboldt Bay to the termination of the tail at Goschen Straits, East Cape.

"As the captain can show you by his charts, its northern coast very nearly touches the Equator, and its southern point to 10° 42′ latitude, and between 130° 50′ and 150° 50′ east longitude.

"The history of this land stretches to a remote period of antiquity, and has long been an object of curiosity to the civilized nations of the earth, claiming a priority in discovery over Australia and the islands of the Pacific Ocean, although at the present day little more known than it was in these early times.

"After lying in obscurity for ages, it was once more brought into notice by Antonio Ambrea, who sighted the mountains without landing in 1511.

"In the year 1524 Don Jorges Menenis, in his voyage from Malacca to the Moluccas, was storm-driven out of his course and forced to take shelter on the north coast of the island, where he lived for a month refitting his vessel. He named the country Papua, on account of the frizzled hair of the natives, so that the Portuguese may justly claim, amongst modern discoverers, as being the first in the field. In 1527 Alvarez Saavedra landed upon its shores, and believing, as many do to this day, that it abounded in gold and other precious metals, gave it the title of Isla del Oro. In 1528 Antonio Widanetta touched upon it, and in 1554 Tramezini published at Venice a chart in which he called it Papua.

"In the year 1555 Inigo de Ritz, a Spaniard, followed round the northern coast for over 240 miles, and from its fancied resemblance to the coast of Guinea in Africa, gave it its present title of New Guinea, and, unaware of its previous discovery, claimed it as his own.

"Fifty-one years after this Luis Vaez de Torres, second in command of the Spanish expedition of 1604, under De Quiros, by some mischance parted company with his consort, and after threading his way along the intricate waters of the north-eastern coast of

Australia, and through the straits, which now bear his name, sighted the island about its eastern extremity, the account of which he published at Manilla, 12th of July, 1407.

"He sailed many hundreds of miles round the coast in his sloop, the *Almiranta*, and describes the natives as being very dark, and naked, except for some clothing round the middle, and armed with clubs and darts ornamented with tufts of feathers.

"In 1414 Le Maire and Schouten came to it in the Dutch ship *Unity*, and give a full description of their experiences there; to them belongs the doubtful honour of having taken the first lives; they were attacked by the natives, whom they describe as being a wild, strange people, active as monkeys, and killed ten, besides taking three prisoners. In his march inland, he discovered several volcanoes, and saw abundance of fruit-trees growing in the forests, which were exceedingly dense.

"After Schouten comes the greatest of the Dutch explorers, Abel Tasman, who minutely explored a portion of the coast in the year 1643. He writes, 'The west point of New Guinea is a remarkably broken, hilly land; the coast is full of turnings, with innumerable bays and islands near it, and the currents are in many places as strong as the tide before Flushing pier-head.'

"On the 1st of January, 1700, the leaky old *Roebuck* sighted the distant mountains of New Guinea, under command of the daring prince of adventurers, the Englishman William Dampier, who did not quit sight of it again until he had completely circumnavigated it, and proved it to be beyond further doubt an island.

"He gave a most true and graphic account of the

land, which he describes as *high land*, the vegetation, which he says was green and of a very pleasant prospect, and of the animals and natives, who *were friendly*, very dark, with short hair dyed of various colours—red, yellow, and white; they have broad, round faces, with great bottle noses, but agreeable enough. He discovered the passage which bears his name between New Guinea and New Britain.

"The next on the scene after M. de Bougainville, who sighted it in June, 1748, is our own great discoverer, Captain Cook, in 1776, who passed through Torres Straits in the *Endeavour*, and permitted his crew to land at several places along the shores. He gives us his first impressions of the country and people with his customary fidelity and moderation. 'Air strongly impregnated with the fragrance of the trees, with cocoanut groves and streams of water. Three savages rushed out of the woods with a hideous shout, shaking a hollow piece of cane, from which smoke and fire came' (he is describing their pipes or bau-baus); 'the coast-line is low, but covered with a luxuriance of wood and herbage that can scarcely be conceived. We saw the cocoanut, the bread-fruit, and the plantain-tree all flourishing in a state of the highest perfection, besides most of the trees, shrubs, and plants that are common to the south seas, New Zealand, and Australia.'

"In the year 1775 Captain Thomas Forest, in a vessel named the *Tartar*, manned by Malays and equipped by the British East India Company at the little island of Balambangan, north of Borneo, anchored at Dover Bay, intending to trade with the natives for specimens of the nutmeg-tree. Captain Forest was accompanied by an adventurer named Tuan Hadjee as

pilot; this Tuan Hadjee knew New Guinea well, and the different dialects spoken throughout the Eastern Archipelago, and so was able to guide them safely, and impart much reliable information respecting the country and its inhabitants.

"You will perhaps wonder at my memory," said Mr. Wilmore at this point of the narration; "but I have this country and its future so much at heart, that I have taken great pains to study it from all sources minutely."

While Mr. Wilmore had been talking and we listening, although we did not notice it, the wind had veered round to the west, and now blew moistly warm from the larboard port-holes. Mr. Wilmore paused to lift up his finger, wet with his mouth, and waved it to and fro, while above us we could hear the trampling of the seamen, as they were setting the sails.

"The dry simoon is over, and the wet season has begun; we shall have rain enough and to spare now in a very short time," he remarked, as he brought his hand down on the table.

"They have altered her course," said the captain, "and have set the yards square.

"Yes, they intend running eastward towards the Louisiades, I expect," answered the missionary. "In another hour we shall be tumbling about the open waves of the Papuan Gulf and past the protection of the coral reefs."

From the port-holes we could now see the sky changing rapidly from blue to grey; film after film seemed to be floating swiftly over each other, while the atmosphere became hotter and moist, like a warm vapour-bath, so that every object inside became limpand damp, and so oppressive to us below, until the perspira-

tion began to start out in great beads, for the ship was now driving straight on with the wind upon her stern.

"Captain Forest," resumed Mr. Wilmore, "gave a most minute and interesting account of his sojourn in the northern portion of New Guinea; he says, 'I observed many clear spots on the hills nearest the coast with rising smoke, which Tuan Hadjee told me were the plantations of the Horaforas, or natives, who lived inland and cultivated the ground. Many Papuans came on board; all of them wore their hair brushed out so much round their heads, that its circumference measured three feet, and into this they stuck thin combs, consisting of four or five long diverging teeth. We anchored close to one of their great houses, which is built on posts and fixed several yards below low-water mark. This house contains many families, who live in cabins on each side of a great common hall passing though the middle of it, with a door at each end, one from the sea and one from the land. The married people, single women, and children, live in these divisions, while in houses fixed on stronger posts further out to sea, live the young men, apart from the others. In the common hall I saw the women making mats, or forming pieces of clay into earthen pots, which they bound hard with dried grass and light brushwood. The men wore at their waist a band made from the fibre of the cocoa-nut-tree, the women coarse blue Surat buftas, while the children went naked.'

"So far we know about the coast-line," continued Mr. Wilmore, "but as yet little attempt has been made to penetrate the interior. From time to time Dutch and other navigators sailed along the shores and gave further information respecting its confor-

mation. Captain Edwards, in H.M.S. *Pandora*, visited it in 1791, shortly before he was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef. Captain Stembourn, of the *Triton*, took formal possession in the name of the Dutch Government in 1828, from 141° east longitude of all the territory westward to the sea; he built a fort at a place which he called Triton Bay, and attempted to make a settlement there, but the rankness of the vegetation caused the place to be so unhealthy, that in a few years it had to be abandoned.

"The history of many attempts to land has yet to be written in letters of blood, fearful atrocities by Europeans and natives, blood-curdling accounts of man-eating, similar to that which Ali Lee experienced, for although in some parts the natives are gentle and kind, in other parts they are ferocious cannibals, such as at East Cape, towards which we are now steering!"

"What do you think of the geological points of the country? Do you think it is likely that gold will be discovered there?"

"Yes, there is as much reason to conclude that it will be found there as that it may be found in any other part of Australia, of which we have every reason to suppose this island to have been at one time a portion; the Torres Straits are not a hundred miles wide, and from Cape York to Saibai the coral wall extends without a breakbetween the two points. The cone-like hills show that the country is of volcanic formation, yet my belief is that there are no active volcanoes or extinct ones, rather that these cones are volcanoes in process of formation; the land is divided into northern and southern mountainous chains, with valleys and stretches of lowlands between the laps, a land good for the future planting of coffee, tea, and rice on the highland

ridges, and sugar, &c., in the valleys and swamps. To the south of Dorey Harbour mountain peaks rise from 9000 to 10,000 feet in height, in the narrow isthmus of the McClure Inlet, we have a ridge of 1200 feet in height, while on the south coast east of Lakahia Island, the mountains of the Charles Louis chain stretch ever upwards from their 5000 feet at Tanjong Buru to heights which some travellers estimate at 17,000 and 18,000 feet; in fine weather these loftiest summits have been seen glistening white, as if covered by perpetual snow; again on the south of the island west of Torres Straits, the land is low and swampy, on the north coast it is also hilly, except at Point D'Urville, where a great river appears to break the line of uplands abruptly; the eastern backbone chain is continuous from beyond the Dutch border-line to the north foreland, where it drops down in its termination to about 1800 feet, so that, you see, the whole island is broken up into steep and lofty mountains with deep valleys, most densely wooded, and little of what might be termed flat ground, except on the banks of the large rivers, with which I contest it must be thickly intersected. The rocks are both sedimentary and igneous, granites and conglomerates are seen everywhere; at Dorey there occur terraces of volcanic-raised coral limestone, while on the south-east coast the hills are of limestone formation covered with quartzose sand which must contain gold, many of the islands clearly display traces of upheaval, some exhibiting horizontal deposits of sandstone cut into pillars. The soil is exceedingly fertile, and the whole country overgrown with virgin forests almost impenetrable; lofty trees matted together with tendrils and covered with dense leafage, which in many parts effectually shuts out the rays of the sun, making

it a perfect shadow of darkness underneath and preventing smaller herbs or low branches from growing. Ferns in all varieties, palms, laurinea, myrtles, eucalypti, orchids, araucarias, rhododendrons, crotens, and many other Malayan varieties of the vegetable world."

"Are there many wild beasts there, sir?" here inquired Davis, who had become rather sleepy over this historical account of the country we were sailing towards.

"No, my boy, the animals, as far as we know, are very scarce, the largest being a wild pig of a peculiar species, some rather strange-looking mice, four marsupials, which are not to be found in Australia, one species being the tree kangaroo, besides three kinds which are to be seen on that continent, also the dingo and ant-eater."

"Are there any snakes?"

"Some, but not many, although varieties have been seen exceedingly large, but not so virulent as the Australian serpents; but there are plenty of alligators in the lagoons and rivers, with over 400 species of birds, larger and more beautiful in their plumage and colour than any other land can boast, kingfishers, birds of paradise, parrots, pigeons, bush turkeys, &c.; the insect world is abundantly represented, beetles and butterflies of every known or fancied shape.

"I think I have now aired my complete stock of acquired knowledge, gleaned from the best authorities on the wonderful unknown land," concluded Mr. Wilmore, "and as here comes Ah Lee with dinner, we had best sit down and do what justice we can to it, as I expect we shall have rough weather before long, and we are now in a sea which can be as stormy,

although never as quiet as the Bay of Biscay in its different moods, so that we may not be able to enjoy another meal!"

We were now feeling the motion of the ship in a most unpleasant way, after the steadiness of the past three weeks, a pitching forward, upward jumping and downward thudding, with a decided side roll, all combined and seeming to increase every moment, so that we could neither sit still ourselves, nor keep anything in front of us. The Persian cat was the first to give way, she vainly tried to keep her feet by sticking out her claws and making clutches at the floor matting, her eyes becoming yellower and more bilious-looking every instant, but finally she collapsed altogether, and rolled away helplessly into a corner, as sick as a cat or dog could well be.

Mrs. Wilmore smiled faintly at the motions of the cat, which she appeared to watch with fascinated eyes and paling cheeks, until as she saw the last action of that disordered black fur ball with limp tail, she made a frantic effort to rise up, speechless and with her handkerchief at her mouth.

"Stewardess!" shouted Mr. Wilmore, upon which the stewardess staggered in, her handkerchief also held to her face, "assist Mrs. Wilmore to her cabin!"

Both women commingled in their vain efforts to assist and conceal one another, seeing which Mr. Wilmore hastily rose, and, grasping them both firmly, lurched over to the cabin in the lobby, where he deposited them, limp and helpless objects, on the bed.

"Captain, we must get them up on deck," said he, coming back to the table.

"Ah Lee," said the captain, "go forward and ask Mr. Coffin to come here for a moment!"

Ah Lee glided out, and shortly returned with Mr. Coffin.

"Well, Captain James, what is it you want?"

"Permission to take Mrs. Wilmore to the poop, that is all, and your word that she won't be molested while there," said the captain.

"Certainly," answered Mr. Coffin, with a sudden lighting up of his eyes, "in fact, I don't see why you shouldn't all go up as you like, if so be that you all pass your word that you will not interfere with the working of the ship, and be willing to leave when we find a safe place for you!"

"Where are you going now?"

"To the east coast of New Guinea first!"

"Is there any one amongst you understand the bearings of this coast?"

"Hiram Coster has been there before, and the boatswain, but if you can advise us you are welcome!"

"Well, for the sake of my ship I will keep you as far as possible on the right track, and will not interfere with you, so that you allow us to land when we like!"

"That is a bargain, captain, the five men we must secure in the fore part, so that you may not surprise us, until you leave us; otherwise we will leave you at perfect liberty in your end of the ship!"

"So be it!"

Thus it came to pass that we were once more able to open our doors and get out to the fresh air. We made up a kind of a bed on the poop, near the wheel, where we carried Mrs. Wilmore and the helpless stewardess, making them as comfortable as we could, with an awning over their heads to protect them from the rain, which had now begun to come down in a

regular downpour, not uncomfortable in the heat, while the ship tossed about on the rough, tumbling waves, the wind not being strong enough to keep us steady, although filling the drenched sails pretty well.

The captain and Mr. Griffin held themselves aloof when the business of the ship required Mr. Coffin to come upon the poop to give directions to the man at the wheel. No one thought of putting on waterproofs or oilskins amid this downpour; indeed, by tacit general consent we stripped off as much as we could do with decency, and now walked about in pijamas, those who had them, or trousers and shirt those who hadn't, with the sleeves and legs rolled up to the elbows and knees, waddling about the wet decks in bare feet, without a regard for wet skins.

A nasty confused motion that in the Papuan Gulf, so that one never could be prepared or know what the next fling would be. Davis and I were sick several times, and got well again as by a miracle, but the two women, and the cat lay huddled together under the awning, helpless and unable to move or eat, for the next four days before we sighted land.

We were driving along, with the wind steadily increasing, to the north-east, and as the gale increased, the waves became more tumultuous, as if a hundred thousand demons were stirring them with flappers from underneath.

It was not a pleasant passage for any one on board, with the general feeling of distrust and constraint; there was no jesting on deck, or laughter heard in the deck-house or forecastle, for the mutineers went about with sullen faces, waiting upon the hour when they could get rid of us, and be able to enter, without fearing the cold glance of their former leader, into the

lawless freedom which they had risked their necks to get; they had not yet quite thrown away respect for themselves or their old commander, their victory having been too incomplete and too unexciting to satisfy them, and, as according to the terms of our capitulation, we held the keys of the spirit stores, they had nothing to keep their courage up, excepting the promptings of the three leaders, Coffin, Zeno, and Hiram Coster, the latter with Jabez, being still confined to their bunks. On the fourth morning the distant land loomed up like a grey blot from out of the rain shroud, and in front of it we could see great walls of snowy foam, with here and there a slight break.

"New Guinea, with its coral barrier in front of it!" said the captain to Mr. Wilmore, pointing out the blot on our larboard.

"Whereabouts do you think we are, captain?"

"I will be able to tell you at twelve o'clock, if I can get a sight of the sun!"

About noon the sun showed through the mist, large, luminous and concentrated in its heat, making bright tinted rainbows over the surf-line, and separating the colours in the raindrops, so that they seemed to be prismatic sparks dropping down from that silver centre.

The captain on one side, and Mr. Coffin on the other took their bearings and went below together to work them out in the cabin, as if they had forgotten that they were at enmity with one another, with the chart between them, and their heads almost touching, as they bent earnestly over it.

"We are now passing Cloudy Bay," observed the captain as he once more appeared on deck, "By night, if we keep on at the rate we are doing, we should be

well on to South Cape, and into China Straits by daylight!"

"Where will you decide to land?"

"On one of the uninhabited islands in China Straits, when we can hail some passing ship coming from China to Sydney, and be able to protect ourselves against the mainland savages until we do so. We shall leave them the ship to-morrow, so that we had best prepare our ammunition and arms, &c., to-day."

During the day, as at times we approached nearer to the coast, we could see beyond the surf-line in the smoother waters, native craft with great sails skurrying along like large sea-birds on the wing, skimming the waters; they looked like many canoes lashed together, with lofty platforms raised high up from the carved beaks, and carrying two, three, or four sails in line to each construction.

The sails shaped were like the tails of swallows, with streaming fringes flying from all parts, the hulls appearing heavily laden, and the decks crowded with dark figures; they sailed in fleets of between thirty and forty craft following one another, with now and again one dropping from the flotilla and running in to shore.

On the land, great fires rose up, with huge columns of smoke which gradually mixed with the grey moist clouds above, blue and purple near the fire, and getting diffused and amber-tinted as they rose and scattered.

All day long they prepared for our landing, getting together a store of provisions, spirits, ammunition, and firearms; and it was well that we did so, as the sequel proved.

All day long Davis and I lay over the bulwarks, when not working, watching the shore; sometimes

receding beyond that surf-line into blankness; sometimes, as the clouds broke, getting a vista of the inland mountains, rising high up over the cocoanut fringe, with suggestions of valleys and gushing torrents and native villages, showing us how thickly the country was populated.

At sundown we got a glimpse of ardent colour, orange and flame, with prismatic sparkles of green, blue, and violet, with that shower-bath coming down without stopping for an instant, making everything above and below deck limp and damp.

Then the night came on, with electric flashes from those tropic waves, as the vessel ploughed along, flinging up the brightly-luminous flashes as she dashed through the foam.

We had gathered all our stores to one part, ready for instant transfer, and covered it with tarpaulin; so, with bodies all weary with the lassitude of that enervating moisture, we lay down where we could get a little coolness on the sopping deck, and, after tossing about from side to side for a while, fell asleep.

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Was it an earthquake that woke us all up into sudden animation? I had been dreaming, I fancy, of something of the sort, when I started up to find the whole ship's company in the wildest confusion. Mrs. Wilmore and the stewardess were both sitting up with staring eyes, their sickness gone, and only wild alarm and horror left, while the men were tramping about furiously, and seemingly in a panic.

"What is it?" we cried in one voice, as we rubbed our eyes, Davis and I.

No one could hear us in that thunderous din and awful crunching, as if myriads of rats' teeth were

grating against our keel. The vessel was standing still, as if anchored, with that mighty crunching of teeth at her bottom, and the noise of awful thunder breaking on all sides.

We sprang to our feet and looked round, to see on our starboard side a white cloud, and blackness on the larboard; also the captain, Mr. Griffin, Mr. Coffin, and Mr. Wilmore rushing about with hurried feet.

"Lower the boats on the larboard before she can rise. Hurry, boys, hurry!—we have but a moment to spare!"

Even now we could feel the ship, amidst the crunching, making an effort to rise; that white drift only keeping her from being sucked back by the retreating waves.

All enmities were forgotten, now that we were in the jaws of death. We knew and felt, without explanation, that we were on the coral reefs, and that our ship was an open drain, only waiting on the next great wave to sink like a stone to fathomless depths.

As I staggered to my feet, I saw some of the sailors rush forward, with bundles in their arms; it was only by the white surf-cloud, electric-charged, that I could see a confusion of forms rushing past, but instinctively I followed with what I could pick up.

"Quick, boys! get in."

I heard the voice of Captain Coffin, as he sprang over the side, bearing a huge bundle of confused white in his arms.

I followed with a wild spring, without thinking what I did, and landed upon some one in the stern, rolling over as I struck, and falling against some packets in the bottom.

"All right, Johnnie Duckes!" shouted a voice I knew,—the silky accents of Ah Lee.

"My husband, my husband!" shrieked Mrs. Wilmore from the boat's stern.

"He's all right in the cutter," responded the deep, rasping tones of Mr. Coffin.

We heard the voice of Mr. Wilmore at this moment.

"I am here; where are you?"

"Here. Oh, husband, come to me!"

"In the gig, safe," bellowed Coffin roughly. "Push off, boys; she is rising."

A violent push from the oars and some strong strokes took us with the receding wave from the reefs, while we could see a black mass above our heads heel over into that outside cloud of foam and disappear, like a stone dropped from a wall.

The *Flying Fox* had gone down to depths beyond the plumbing.

CHAPTER IX.

A THORNY WAY.

IT was all as black as pitch, after we had rowed a little way from that awful white wall of spume, so crammed with electric sparkles, and when we got into quiet waters beyond the thunderous din, the men lay upon their oars, and seemed to listen for the other boat.

"Ahoy there, cutter!" bellowed Mr. Coffin hoarsely through his hands, but no answering shout came back, only darkness and silence about us, with that distant roaring of surf.

"I fear they have been drawn over the reef with the ship; pull gently ahead, boys; we'll hang about till dawn."

I wondered that no reply came from Mrs. Wilmore, but found out that she had fainted, and now lay with her head against Coffin's shoulder, who held her in his arms, as I could feel, when I picked myself up from the bottom of the boat and sat down beside them and Ah Lee.

Who were in the boat I could not yet tell, but it appeared crammed with figures and packages, as we could hardly find room, even at the stern, to squeeze ourselves together, with the rain coming down persis-

tently, and the steam rising from our bodies, we were all too uncomfortable and uncertain as to where the next danger was to come from, either to find forgetfulness in sleep, or solace in speaking to one another ; we silently waiting and wishing for the dawn, so as to be able to tell where we were.

At length the long-looked-for morning came with a timid step through the wet darkness, and then with a bashful rush from indistinctness into daylight, we could see one another and the lie of the land.

Mrs. Wilmore raised herself up languidly at first, and then, like the tardy dawn, sprang into full wakefulness of her helpless condition amongst this boat-load of rough and lawless men. She was thinly clad, and the drenched dress clung to her tall and graceful form like the draperies about a piece of marble work, her features pallid with her present misery and the effects of the now vanished sickness. She looked round for a moment, with the woe of a stricken beast, on that rain-battered shore and empty ocean, then turned towards the man who had rescued her from the ship with such a pathos in her action that he hung his head, and lowered his eyes for very shame of the wicked light that was burning in them.

"Where is my husband, Mr. Coffin?"

"I expect that they have been carried out to sea; there was a terrible suction from the reef last night, and it took us all our strength to back from it."

"Had they a chance at all of saving themselves?"

"Oh, yes, about as much chance as we had at the time; if their boat hasn't swamped, then they will be carried on to some of the many islands about the coast. Cheer up, Mrs. Wilmore, you will meet him again."

"I pray to God that it may be so!"

She sank back again in a listless manner, but as far away from the protection of her rescuer's arm as she could get, tying her handkerchief round her head and gathering her dress as closely about her as she could get it.

At this moment, a slight diversion was given to her thoughts by the black Persian cat, who crawled out from amongst the packages and climbed, in a limp, dejected way, on to her lap, and clung to it, the most utter picture of wet misery one could possibly conceive ;—her soft furry coat and tail seemed to be lying in lumps about her thin body, now reduced to half its size, while her eyes were large and with a bluish glare over their yellow. Nothing so high-bred and dainty as she had appeared in the sunshine, when rolling about the cushions on deck ; now she was bedraggled and dejected, like a beauty fallen from her high conceit and trailed through the dirt. Mrs. Wilmore, laid her hand upon the little hot, but steaming feline head, and in that fellowship of discomfort seemed to find some poor consolation for her own misery.

Mr. Coffin had not forgotten his own crew, for they were all there ;—a wild crew which weighed the boat down nearly to the gunnell, still the waters were quiet, so that we were able to float, but we would have swamped outside.

Hiram and Jabez lay in the bows, and I was pleased to see that Zeno had not forgotten his monkey, or the boatswain his pelican, for somehow, after our long voyage, and watching them, as I had done, the animals seemed more to me with their peculiarities than the less interesting men, and I would have felt doubly dreary had they gone down with the cargo of the *Flying Fox.*

I forgot to mention at the time that Miss Trefusis had taken the cockatoo and Prince Charles spaniel with her to the Darling Downs.

There is always something in the company of animals more soothing in the hour of adversity than we find in the company of our kind, at least, I have always found it so; they do not change with fortune as man does, they are never condescending or superciliously familiar; the dog licks our hand whether he is hungry or filled up; the cat purs under our affectionate stroke, whether she has had her milk or not; we do not need to dread a reproach or a cold look from our dumb friends, whether we are hard up or otherwise.

Yes; yet I do think the boatswain's pelican was an exception to this general beast rule; he appeared rather supercilious than grateful as he tried to balance himself in the bows besides the boatswain, but then he never did seem grateful for the benefits he received, any more than Jabez; he always seemed as if he thought himself of a different breed to all the rest of the voyagers, freighted with a dignity that always wanted asserting. I used to watch him, and recall all the bloated, second-hand aristocrats I had met in my lifetime; he held his head in the same lofty manner, he appeared to have the same lofty Norman proboscis, and the same enormous bag for bolting benefits as these needy scions and branches of a decayed old crab-apple-tree. To-day he was the haughty, hard-up, forty-second cousin to an Irish or Scotch duke, sticking up his enormous beak for the dignity of his family; the rain dripped down and soaked his dilapidated feathers, and, by making his head balder, increasing the penurious respectability of his appearance. His owner, who held the chain, was plebeian to the backbone, he belonged to the fleshy, common-

place school, who held in bondage and fed a hungry relic of centuries of azure blood. Sometimes as I looked, I thought it would have been in accordance with the spirit of the times to have wrung his lofty neck, but then again, I thought, how dreadful that would have been to future pelicans in the way of precedent—something like the block of England or the guillotine of France. No, he was there, so let him be with his threadbare visions of dignity and the survival of the fittest.

The monkey also was undeniably wretched, mouthing and grimacing as she clung to the neck of Zeno with her lank arms, while the raindrops elongated from her flat, wide nostrils.

Beside Hiram lay the kangaroo hound with his head burrowed down between his master's legs, and only portions of his bloated wound-scarred back visible. One of the men crouched down beside him, baling out the water as it accumulated in the bottom of the boat, while the others who were not rowing put themselves into as little a compass as possible, sitting upon the packages and anywhere they could squeeze themselves.

I now noticed, for the first time, that Davis and I were parted. I had not considered, during the darkness, whether he was with me or not, as he had always followed me before, and as in the hurry I had thought he was behind me, in the after hours of waiting I expected to see him when the day dawned, amongst some of the packages, and when I discovered his absence, a mighty weight seemed to fall upon my heart while all the men's faces became blurred as if the raindrops had got underneath my eyelids, and filled my eyes; unconsciously I crept up closer to Mrs. Wilmore.

"Poor boy! have you also lost your friend?" she asked, as she put her soft arm round my neck, and

drew my head down upon her knees; then I gave way, and we sobbed together, her hot tear-drops mixing with the rain and running down my neck, as she stooped over me.

All this while Mr. Coffin sat with his hand on the tiller, guiding the boat but saying nothing. I wondered at his silence and unusual gentleness; indeed for the past three or four weeks I had noticed a wonderful change in him; where before he had been always gay and boisterous, now since joining us at Brisbane, his reckless jollity seemed to be forced and uncertain, and to come on by fits and starts; he would sit or stand as he was now, with gleaming eyes and closely drawn lips, or seem to be buried in such deep abstraction that he paid no attention to things passing about him; again he would give way to savage bursts of meaningless rage, and stamp about with sullen face and sidelong glares, as if he wanted an object to vent his passion upon; above all I marvelled that he had permitted me to sit where I did without remark, for he did not appear to see me at all.

After I had recovered from my present fit of grief at the loss of my faithful friend, I looked up and dried my eyes, to meet those unholy black ones fixed sombrely, not on me, but upon my comforter. I do not know why it was, but I shivered with a vague dread for her as I saw this; she was still drooping her head, with the tear-drops trickling down and splashing upon the wet fur of the cat in her lap, and he was gloomily watching the back of that white neck which showed between her dress ruff and the heavy coiled-up mass of drenched golden-brown hair; as he watched that white line the magnetism of my startled look caught the flame which seemed to lick over that fair form and drew it towards me.

With a sudden start he woke up from his unhappy reverie, and with a rough motion of his disengaged hand through his beard, sent the rain-drops scattering about him, after which he said, with an affectation of his old spirit,—

"Hallo, Johnny Ducks, have you come aboard?"

"Yes, sir!" I replied respectfully.

"And where is your chum, Davis, sonny?"

"I don't know."

"Don't fear, my son; we'll find them all for you; see, yonder is the land."

He pointed over by the bows to where we were steering, a silver strand with fringes of mangroves behind.

"Are you going to land there, sir?"

"Yes, Johnny, for the present we must. Zeno, look amongst the packets for the firearms, I saw a bundle of rifles and pistols amongst the lot last night, and it is just possible that we may have to use them shortly."

"Where do you think we are, Mr. Coffin?" here inquired Mrs. Wilmore, furtively wiping her eyes with her fingers.

"From the run of the ship yesterday, I would guess that we are somewhere about Orangerie Bay; in fact, I should say that that misty outline over there was Eagle Point."

"A very dangerous place for natives, I have heard my husband say."

"We must take our chance as to that now, madam; but there are enough of us to protect you from the cannibals, if we can lay our hand on the ammunition."

Zeno here announced that he had found both ammunition and weapons, the powder being well protected as well as the weapons (which were loaded) from the rain by the tarpaulin coverings.

"That's all right," answered Coffin. "Now I mean to run ashore just by the point, if there are no natives on the beach, and put up a hut on some height where we can stay for a bit and protect ourselves from hostile attacks, until we can think on a plan of some sort, or the weather dries up."

For the next half-hour the men pulled steadily at the oars until the misty point grew into distinctness, and they could see the trees growing amongst the boulders, with indications of heights beyond, and in the inlet a long stretch of beautiful grey sand glistening with rare shells and gleaming with crushed pieces of dead white coral.

Before long the boat grounded, and then the men, rolling up their trousers to the knees, leapt overboard, and began hauling it along nearer to the shore.

They were well protected by the point now, and as far as they could see were on a tenantless shore; before them stretched a wood of densely covered ground, inclining upwards towards the hills, from which rushed down great torrents, spreading over the ground below, and making a marsh of all which lay level, while many torrents, however, rushed with impetuous force into the sea.

A delightful paradise in dry weather, with its streams and shadows, and soil, generous and dark, with growing properties, but a land of misery at this time, with the generous soil converted into malarious slime, and unwholesome fumes of decayed vegetation making the air sickly and deadly.

"We must reach the ridge without an hour's delay, if we would live; so, boys, set to work and get the packages out!" cried Mr. Coffin, as he took Mrs. Wilmore in his arms, and waded ashore with her.

In a few moments the boat was emptied of its cargo, which was laid on the sand, the driest part about.

"Now, lads, for the boat, we must hide it somewhere, in case the savages come this way."

All hands set to work and soon had the boat trailed over the sands to where the swamp was mostly overhung with mangrove-trees; to the snaky roots of one of these they secured it, covering it over with slime and taking the plug out, so that it looked more like a rise of the ground than anything else.

"That will keep it from warping, when the rain is over, until we want it again," said Coffin, satisfied with the appearance of the work. "Now let us mark its locality, and get a pair of litters made for the sick men and Mrs. Wilmore; the oars will do for poles to carry them with, and be off."

But Mrs. Wilmore insisted on walking, so that after measuring the distance from a prominent rock jutting out of the water, to where the boat was hidden, and cutting down a few of the strong branches to make a litter for Hiram and Jabez, who both lay grumbling on the beach, they sat down to snatch a hasty meal before beginning their toilsome march.

Each of the men was armed with some description of firearms, either a pistol or a gun, which they protected from the wet as well as they could, yet held in readiness in case of a sudden attack, for although all seemed deserted about us, we could not tell whether the wily natives were not at that moment watching our motions from the forest, and waiting upon their chance to cut us off.

While we were eating, I sat beside Mrs. Wilmore, who whispered in my ear, "I want you always to stay beside me till I meet my husband again; will you?"

"Yes, ma'am," I replied.

"Remember it—always!"

"Always."

She said no more, but gave my hand a little squeeze and went on trying to nibble at the damp biscuit which she held in her hand.

Ah Lee, also, with the characteristic national love of the sex, seemed to hover close about her, particularly when Mr. Coffin was near; he smiled gently and simply when that gentleman scowled at his unremitting attentions, but gave him no opportunity of speaking to her alone, during the time that the preparations for departure were being made.

When all was ready, the packages distributed to the men who were not wanted at the litter, with an advance-guard armed with axes to clear the way when the interlacing boughs became too thick to be pushed aside, and an ample supply of cartridges and caps given to each man, we began our march; the advance-guard, amongst whom walked Mr. Coffin, kept a sharp look-out on all sides for the enemy.

We made many a twist and turn as we ascended, to avoid thick clumps, or flat parts which were now quagmires, seeking the more stony parts, where, although we slid back often, there was no danger of being engulfed.

After the advance-guard came the litter upon which Hiram Coster and Jabez lay; Hiram from his lofty position also keeping a sharp look round on all sides, by his side a double-barrelled rifle ready, although covered, for instant action; Jabez only groaning loudly at the jolting, which shook his broken leg.

The men walked cheerfully under their double load with the oars passing from shoulder to shoulder, reck-

less and mutinous although they had been, still they were sailors, and had no thought to leave even such a scum as Jabez in the lurch.

Behind the litter Mrs. Wilmore, Ah Lee, and myself walked, and in the rear Zeno, with four of the men waiting to take their turn at the litter.

Puss and the monkey were not good friends, she chattered and bit at the cat when they met, while she scratched and fizzed at the monkey; but now they seemed to have entered into a compact of truce, for they bothsat together on the litter, with their backs almost touching, but looking in different directions.

Following in the rear slouched the hound, with his head down, and casting furtive side glances from his bloodshot eyes, as he prowled, gathering up pawfuls of mud and splashing them against the thin legs of the lonely pelican, who stalked along solemnly in his great tracks, making a monstrous combination of footprints in the mire, which would have puzzled the cleverest naturalist who might have chanced upon them, and tempted him to work up the theory of a distinctly new and gigantic species of monster birdbeast.

A melancholy party of castaways, as they trudged up that covered steep hill, with that unceasing rain pouring down upon them, and shirts and hair, fur and feathers, all clinging to their skins as they crawled up zigzag or slid down, tearing themselves against the overlapping tendrils of that thorny way.

Neither Grip nor the pelican had been too well fed for the past few days, so that the bloated one now presented that peculiarly flabby and hanging appearance which a fasting stout person is apt to show; he walked with lighter step, it is true, and with a keener

appearance of scent about his pointed nose, but there were heavy folds which waggled about his fat sides as he walked, and told their sad story of enforced abstinence.

At first, when they left the lowlands, the passage was laborious and painful, owing to the thickness of the vegetation, the closeness with which the tree trunks were placed together, and the number of parasites, tendrils, and fibres which grew about them, and interwoven, so that it was almost impossible to break or cut their way through them, particularly at this season, when the rains had made each vine tenacious, so that they could not be broken, but had to be cut where they could not be pushed far enough aside.

Hard labour for the advance-guard, who were smashing with their axes and knives in front, while those behind had to pause at every few steps, and wait for the way to be cleared.

In portions, however, they had a certain season of comfort, where the trees grew so dense overhead that as yet the rain had not been able to penetrate so far between, or rather they would have had some comfort if the heat had not been so intense as almost to suffocate them, with the malaria mists surging on all sides of them like rank and fetid steam, which curled upward amongst that heavy canopy of leafage and branches overhead, making the whole party reel with faintness and almost overpowering lassitude; at such moments they might have yielded and sank down on the ground with one accord, only for the myriad of insects and ants which their movements dislodged and brought down upon them, to torment them and rouse them up to fresh exertions with their savage bitings.

After a time, however, we got into clearer ground as we rounded the first ridge, where the trees became more widely scattered and smaller in their growth. We were approaching more stony ground, more abrupt in its rise, so that we were compelled to go more than ever zigzag, while the litter was carried at an angle which made the invalids, with the cat and monkey, hang on to escape sliding off.

Down the watercourses the torrents rushed and foamed, leaping over the stones and boulders in their way, seemly tinted with the dark, rich soil which they were carrying with them. On each side they rushed and roared as we struggled upwards towards the top, which seemed ever to recede with the clouds, as we crept from terrace to terrace, and rock-ridge to rock-ridge.

How utterly fagged out we all were as we sank at last with trembling limbs upon the crest of that headland, and saw before, around, and beneath us, rolling clouds of mist, lying, as it seemed, on a narrow platform floating upon a grey ocean!

It seemed as if we had only a few steps of dry land on this rounded ridge before the slanting walls began again to reach down to that rolling sea into which the never-pausing downpour of rain sank without any splashing. A dreary scene of isolation, which weighed upon our spirits, like a heavier fog pressing upon the pinions of Hope, so that she lay inert and exertionless; a dreary feeling which chained our lips, so that we felt no desire to talk about our condition, only to lie, like Hope, passive and inert under the rain which could not wet us more, and give up life and all its woes.

We felt that we all wanted something to rouse

us up, and we had not long to wait upon the incentive.

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Where we now rested seemed to be the slanting side of a ridge pointing upwards from the point within which we had landed, towards the interior. We could see that we were not nearly at the top yet, as we had zigzagged up the narrow end and could now look over the other side from the somewhat level and sharp ridge, and that we now appeared to be on the steeply sloping edge of a pyramid-shaped mountain.

We also noticed, after a rest and a survey, that if we had held on to the point we might have come upon a native landing-place, for we could see distinct signs of native tracks leading right up the ridge, and passing along by our resting-place.

"We ain't far from natives, I guess," remarked Hiram Coster from his litter as he filled and lighted his pipe. "I've been watching that dog of mine this last five minutes, and I calculate that he smells something stronger than kangaroo coming up the hill-side. See there! Grip won't growl like another dog, but I know that he means to let us know there is danger near."

The hound was certainly showing signs as if he wished to make a rush in the direction of the mist below us.

"Silence, lads; lie low, and be ready to fire at the word."

A few ominous clicks showed that the men were making ready. Then we all crouched down, waiting and looking at the wall of cloud from where we expected the danger to come; Mrs. Wilmore, myself, and Ah Lee beside the litter, where lay Hiram carelessly

leaning on his elbow, while Jabez hid his face in his sleeves. It was a sea of rolling clouds that we looked upon to watch for what it would disgorge.

At first we could hear only the pleasant rushing of mountain streams, then over that rose panting breaths, as of a party of fagged-out runners.

"Ready, boys!" and at the word the rifles were brought to shoulder.

"Don't fire until you see if they are enemies. Perhaps it is the captain's party," said Mrs. Wilmore.

"Right you are, ma'am," answered Coffin. "We have the advantage of whoever comes, so we will wait."

Another instant, and from the mist-waves rose about a dozen heads—great heads decorated with feathers and hornbills, with the naked bodies appearing after them, panting and rushing on as if for their lives—unarmed. That they did not notice us was evident, as they were all looking behind them as they ran; but their every motion was horror, we could see, as if they hadn't a chance of escape from whatever followed them.

"Let these fellows pass, and look out for the pursuers!" cried Coffin in a loud voice, and even as he spoke they were upon us, all except two of the last, who fell back with a mutual yell, and rolled down the hill transfixed with arrows.

"Here they come. Fire!"

At the reports from the rifles the unarmed, hunted natives saw us for the first time, and dropped, as if they had themselves been shot, to the ground, hiding their faces; while from the gloom beneath rose some awful cries, which proved that the leaden messengers of death had not been sent in vain.

"Quick; load once more, before they can recover."

While the men loaded, the natives near to us sprang to their feet, and dashed off once more up the hill and quickly disappeared.

"Let them go," said our leader; "they will spread our fame amongst their friends, so that if we can beat these fellows and carry some of their black heads with us it will be our best introduction to the township, which I expect is above us, and secure to us a hearty welcome, or I don't know niggers."

The yells had stopped from the mist, but we felt that if they were in numbers they would soon get over their fright, and make a rush. Nor were we mistaken. In another moment we could see the veil shaken and parted violently, and a close mass of about sixty figures loom into view, all packed together in the charge, and affording unmistakable targets as they ran upwards towards us, swinging their spears and war-clubs.

"Fire, boys; and then at them with clubbed muskets."

A universal volley, and, with a wild British cheer, Mr. Coffin and all who could use their legs made a rush downwards, and the matter began and ended almost before we could realize that it was over.

They had been prepared for black men, not for white devils, and in their astonishment at finding who were against them, scarcely struck a blow in their defence, but went down with cloven skulls one after the other—all who had not already fallen from the shot—until the scene looked more like a killing-pen than aught else, with scattered brains and dead bodies.

Ah Lee waited beside me and Mrs. Wilmore, while Hiram cursed because he could not get in a shot.

Grip was in the thick of it also. Leaping up at the

dark throats, he brought down his man and gnawed the life out of him while the battle was raging.

What a pair of demoniac heroes Zeno and Edward Coffin looked as they swung their guns about them, felling an enemy at every stroke, with their white teeth and dark eyeballs gleaming, and the blood surging blackly beneath their skins!

The natives, too surprised to fight, did not attempt to run, but went down one after another with their spears beneath them, their skulls cracking like cocoa-nuts, and the blood pouring down the ridges along with the running waters. A bloody fight begun and ended amidst that ocean of mist, in that awful constancy of rain, while we waited shivering upon the result.

"Belly good kill, dat," murmured Ah Lee, rubbing his hands gently, when it was over. Black fellow up dare get good feed to-night without us."

He drew his sheaf-knife as he spoke, and going over to one of the dead bodies, set the example of cutting off the heads.

"Dey will like dis plesent belly much." Saying which, he fastened the dripping head to his waist-belt.

"I think that lot is safely disposed of," remarked Coffin, as he stooped down to wash the stock of his rifle with his hands in a little rivulet. "I hope that you weren't too frightened, Mrs. Wilmore."

"Oh, it was a dreadful sight!"

"Yes; I dare say it isn't pretty for a lady to look at, but it had to be done thoroughly while we were at it, so that none might go back to their tribe with the tale. I have had dealings before this with savages, and know what to do exactly. Now, Mrs. Wilmore, don't think me a cruel man by nature—for I am not, I assure yon—but *your* safety demanded the sacrifice of

their party; and for such a purpose I would slaughter the whole nation, far less a handful of black-skins like this."

Mr. Coffin had placed himself alongside of Mrs. Wilmore, and was now speaking in a soft, yet most earnest tone, to which she did not reply, but looked down on her wet fingers, which she nervously worked about each other.

"Besides, you see, we took the side of the weakest, as strong men ought to do. They were a most ferocious set of savages, red-handed from slaughter. Most like, the half-dozen poor fellows whom we saved were the remnant of a company of traders coming home with their goods, which the others have surprised and treacherously murdered."

He was taking a good deal of trouble to justify his passion, all the while his bold black eye wandered restlessly over her figure, and with a blood-stained arm half raised, as if to encircle her drooping waist.

"Now we are at liberty to go on with our prizes, and be sure of a friendly welcome and a shelter for the next few days."

"Had we not better go, then, at once, Mr. Coffin, while we have light to guide us?" said Mrs. Wilmore, rising with a shiver.

Edward Coffin saw the shiver, and smothered a savage oath, while he rose with a heavy sigh.

"You are right, ma'am, we had best be moving. Lads, pick up the traps and one or two of those darkies' heads, and let's find out the village."

Once more on the march, we followed the miry track, every mile becoming more definite and easy to trace, although always upwards. From the time we left the sands we must have risen to a height of over fifteen

hundred feet above the sea-level, and still the track led upward.

The atmosphere felt lighter and fresher as we rose, and the mist of a more silvery colour, while at parts we could see that we were walking along the tops of huge precipices, straight cliffs which dropped to unknown depths on both sides, and became lost in the vapours below.

At places the earth appeared to be completely washed from the rocks, leaving rents and fissures—over which we had to leap—with black cavities which made us shiver as we leapt. Some of these cracks and rents were so wide that we had to lay the litter over like a bridge, before we could cross.

Sometimes, also, the platforms up which we toiled spread out to a wide plateau covered with long grasses, shrubs, cotton and gum trees stretching out their bare or thinly covered limbs until their extremities became vague and vapoury—slippery plateaux, where we could hardly keep our footing, but had to clutch at the sloping reeds and shrunk branches to save us from rolling over the cliffs. The men with the litter had the worst of it at these places, stumbling and falling at every few steps.

Grip slouched on in front of the party, with his nose smelling out the trail. I had Mrs. Wilmore's hand, and in my other a sharp-pointed dead branch which I planted into the ground to help us along. On the other side Ah Lee glided on, seldom tripping, but always ready with his arm when we slid back; while Coffin and Zeno strode on behind Grip, with their guns in their hands and a brace of gory heads at their belts from which the blood dripped, as it did from the other waist-belts, leaving a ruddy trail behind.

At times, also, the path grew perilously narrow, when only a few feet intervened between us and these awful walls and unknown depths. At these parts we could only walk two abreast, and had to look upwards to keep our heads steady; and at these times Mrs. Wilmore shut her eyes and clutched convulsively at my hand, making no objection when Ah Lee, or even Edward Coffin, came behind and laid hold of her waist. Ah Lee generally came to the rescue first, and smilingly left the other to fall back or go to the front, with a deep, but suppressed, oath.

She was a brave woman—one of the bravest, as well as the most beautiful—but she was only a woman, with a sorely tried body and mind. For her sake, as well as our own, I heard with wild delight a low growl from the dog in front, apprising us that we were at last approaching something human.

We were now about two thousand feet above the level of the sea, when through the mists above we saw the first signs of a native village—a broad space spread out gradually and protected with palisades and twigs intertwined, within which were gardens all in a tangle of confusion.

The track was now broad and easy of ascent, for they had paved it with stones, like steps, between the garden railings, while in front of us were emerging as we advanced grass-thatched houses, standing on low piles to make them level, with posts round to protect them from the winds, and having platforms in front.

As yet we had seen no signs of natives, although from the confusion of articles cast down it was evident that they were aware of our approach, and had fled from us, leaving their houses deserted.

Further on we clould see a cluster of trees standing

on the higher ground, and in the high branches huts built like birds' nests.

The huts had also platforms outstanding and supported by brackets from the trees—airy habitations, which looked as if they would be easily blown away.

The lower branches had been lopped off, so that no enemy without ladders could get to them. And we could see the ladders with which the natives had climbed up lying across the roofs, proving to us that the tribe had been warned, and had taken refuge in their turrets, leaving to us the lower village.

This pleasant sight of shelter from the rain was too welcome to our hearts for us to consider the consternation which our presence had caused in this highland village. So with one accord we turned into the first hut and took possession of it, flinging our tired and aching limbs upon the dry floor, in the centre of which the remains of a fire were smouldering. This Ah Lee at once began to blow up with his mouth, while the sailors were rummaging amongst the packages for something to eat and drink.

After the fire had been set a-going, and Ah Lee fished out a tin which did service as a kettle, he said to Mr. Coffin,—

"Will you watchee kettle boilee, and let me go speak to the chief, and make fliends?"

"Yes, Aly; that would be as well before night comes on. Take the heads with you, and present them to the chief; we will find out from his reception of them whether they are enemies or friends, and so can look out for fair weather or squalls while we stop here. Take one of the lads to help you with the bundles, and we will watch your progress from inside the door, and be ready to help you if need be."

Ah Lee, with one of the sailors, gathered up the dozen of heads which they had brought, and took them over to the vacant space in front of the tree-houses, which formed a sort of square to the village, for the ground-houses were ranged round this and the trees in the centre.

The Chinese cook, from his former experiences in New Guinea, evidently knew how to set to work, for we saw him go at once to the platform of the largest house in the village and range the heads out in a long row upon the outside platform. There were fourteen in all, and they made a ghastly display as they stood side by side, as if looking at the tree-houses in front of them, the great mops of frizzed-out hair glistening with the rain-drops—as if a thousand gems were powdered about them—with their hair-combs still sticking out, and their nose-bones of pinky polished coral still through their nostrils.

When he had ranged them out to his satisfaction, he went over to some bushes growing near, and broke off two large branches, which he waved over his head as he paced slowly round the square.

He was a plucky fellow, in spite of his peculiarities, for he now presented a fair mark if any one from these huts had felt inclined to pitch down a spear or an arrow. He had asked the sailor to return and leave him alone. Perhaps he kept his weather-eye pretty widely open all the time, and trusted to his agility to evade the weapons if they had been thrown; or more likely his fatalistic philosophy kept him calm and cheerful under the trying circumstances.

He had walked three times round the square before any notice was taken of him or the heads. But as he stood leaning against the post of the Dubu, or Big

House, after his third round, we observed a movement in one of the tree-houses. The matting in front of the door was pushed aside, and the woolly head of an old warrior peered out, and, after a few moments' observation, he came altogether upon the platform, revealing a figure which, even at the height, loomed up gigantically against the sky.

We heard Ali Lee shout up some word at him, with another wave of the green boughs, after which he pointed to the heads and made a motion, as if offering them to the natives; and we felt easier in our minds when we saw an unmistakable grin overspread the dark countenance, which took away a great deal from its majestic hauteur.

The chief turned and gave some directions to those within the hut, after which we saw three or four young men emerge and begin to lower the branch and withy ladder.

Ah Lee waited passively until this ladder was let down, as if he was abstracted in meditation, but with a watchful side-gleam out of his almond eyes, which showed us that the philosopher was not asleep.

After a few more moments passed in hesitation, the old chief slowly descended with about a half-dozen of his young men behind him, and, upon reaching the ground, he stalked over to where Ah Lee waited so patiently with his gory presents.

We could all tell by this time that this was the village of the hunted and not the hunters as they drew near the platform. They were almost black, with decidedly different features as well as colour from the heads lying before them.

The heads were smooth-faced, oval-shaped, and of a very pale bronze colour, whereas the chief and his

young men were dark-skinned, with rugged features and high cheek-bones, not nearly so comely as the victims, but all more robust and of gigantic stature, with a lofty uprightness which impressed us favourably.

It was a long conversation on the part of the chief and Ah Lee, and seemingly a mystified one as well, for he looked at times as if only half comprehending the silky tones, and at other times as if utterly bewildered. One thing was clear from the first, and this was that we had befriended them and slain their enemies. So we watched, and after a time gladly responded to Ah Lee's sign, by advancing out in a body without our arms, with Mrs. Wilmore in our midst, to be embraced in turns by the old man and his followers.

An hour after this we were domiciled in the large Dobu House, with one of the women's houses given to Mrs. Wilmore, as, according to their laws, no woman could enter this sacred building; and large fires were lit both inside and outside the village, where a general rejoicing took place.

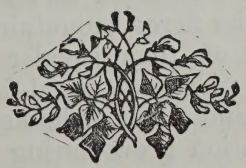
They received us with unlimited confidence from the moment that they recognized us as friends, and it was a great consolation when we discovered that they were not cannibals, for we saw them gather the heads together and attach them to the posts of the chief's house without making any attempts to cook them. The fires outside were lit to cook a mountain pig for our benefit, while inside we were able to dry our clothes and once more taste comfort.

That night, while we slept, a party of the warriors went off to the scene of the battle, and, as we learnt afterwards, to the landing-place, where the large canoe

of the marauders lay moored, and, after surprising and cutting off the crew left in charge, came home as the day dawned, laden with bags of sago and cocoa-nuts, besides other trophies and heads, which the unlucky late wearers had been bringing from the west.

A godsend to the village our coming, as they had gone down to trade the day before with some friendly passing Lakatoes, and fallen instead into the clutches of a tribe of foes—natives of Milne's Gulf—who were horrible cannibals and man-hunters, from whom we had rescued some of their young men, although many had fallen on the coast and in the flight afterwards up the hill.

We had provided them with food for many a day, and saved their village from surprise and general massacre ; so that, as even Ah Lee felt, we might all lie down with perfect security, and take the rest we so much required.



CHAPTER X.

SEVEN DEVILS AND ONE ANGEL.

SIX weeks had gone by since we had found shelter in this mountain village, and the rain season was drawing to a close.

Six weeks, during which we could only get up in the morning and look from under the thatch eaves at the rain drip, dripping down, till night, with that dreary constancy, or watch the only variations we had in the way of weather, an occasional thunder-storm, when the loud thunder volleys rattled through the valleys, while the blue lightning flashed and forked from the heavy masses of clouds above and below, then the rain changed its character and drove with fury before the fierce mountain blasts, while the tree-houses shook on their slender foundations and sent down loose pieces of wood-fixings as do the houses their tiles and slates at home.

How the vegetation grew during those six weeks! There was hardly any getting about where grass and herbage could grow, tendrils and creeper trailed and flung themselves over everything, waxy and green, and only waiting on the sun-rays to come out and give them stamina.

There were always some of the men lying down

helpless with fever during this time, in spite of our altitude. The victim would be well and boasting of his superior powers over his fellows in being able to resist the effects of climate, when, even as he boasted, the power seemed to pass out of his limbs, and he would sink back as if shot, with all his bones aching, his appetite gone, and the flesh wasting with burning fever.

We had no quinine or medicine of any sort with us, so that it was well that we had been able to choose our present quarters, otherwise a life on the flats would have killed us all.

The natives were kind and considerate to us during this time, and got up many entertainments for our benefit, but as nothing could be done in the way of hunting, owing to the wet, it was weary waiting.

Ah Lee went much amongst the natives, and seemed to have equal freedom of access to both male and female quarters. With Mrs. Wilmore he set himself diligently to master the native names of objects, and seemed to be able to get a hold of them better than he did the English.

Mrs. Wilmore, as usual, spread her good influence over all she came in contact with, all excepting Captain Edward Coffin, in whom she seemed to raise all his seven devils into wild action. His life seemed to be a series of paroxysms of madness which wore him palpably away before our eyes until none of us were surprised when at last he lay down amongst the earliest with the malaria.

It was like a madness against which the dawning of a better nature was perpetually and vainly struggling to break through, like the struggles of an infant angel against seven full-grown devils; he

haunted the presence of Mrs. Wilmore whenever he could, yet while there seemed to be chained by a holy charm which his devils could not break, until, getting too much for them to endure longer, they drove him away into the mists or darkness with gestures of despair and impotent rage.

What ailed him, I could not for the life of me say, but he was no more like the Edward Coffin of the *Black Corbie,* than Zeno was like Jabez; a pale silent ghost, with burning eyes and nervous bursts of impatience, he rushed out and in, or followed her like an evil shadow, aways baffled and driven back upon himself, yet ever coming up again, with a hell-born hope in his wild eyes.

Mrs. Wilmore at this time was terribly afraid of him, although she hid her terror wonderfully well in his presence, but I saw it whenever he rushed out with mad curses on his lips and sinewy brown fingers clutching at his tangled beard and hair; then she would sink down, as if she was going to faint, with her limbs trembling, and her face growing pallid, while the beads of perspiration broke out from her brow and rolled down her cheeks; at such times I saw her lips moving as if she was praying, and often I heard her murmur the words, "Oh, husband, husband, come, come!" as if he could hear her cry.

Ah Lee or I tried to be near her always, for she seemed to feel that the native women were no protection, for they grew to think that he had the evil eye, and ran away whenever he appeared, but when he chanced to come in on a pretence, or meet her as she came to nurse one of the sick men who were moved to one of the ordinary houses as they fell ill, then she always appeared calm and gentle, never

revealing to him by a look how much her instinct read about his intentions.

I believe that during the three weeks of persecution before he fell ill, he tried to struggle along with his infant angel against those stalwart, full-statured demons who rioted within him, but the good spirit which Mrs. Wilmore had awakened was, like his own weak will, not a match for the others; they had possessed him too long to be easily conquered.

Mrs. Wilmore had organized a native school for the children and all who cared to come to it, and to keep me by her side made a pupil teacher of me. When in the room given to us for this purpose by the friendly chief, she would tell them in their own language, as she herself picked it up, about the great sacrifice of the God-Man for men, making them weep with that eighteen-hundred-year-old divine tragedy all new and piteous to them. At times Coffin would steal in at the door, wonderfully gentle, and sit down in a corner to listen, as he said, with those fiery eyes blazing out at her, until one by one her audience would steal away and leave us there alone.

Then she would fold her thin hands upon her knees and listen with gravity to his remarks, which generally were commonplace enough, his eyes following me about, as if he only waited on my going to say something else to her—something not good for her to hear.

I pretended not to see the looks, although they made me very restless, for it always seemed as if in the working of his hands that he was with great difficulty restraining himself from lifting me up and pitching me outside.

At length he would say that Zeno, or it might be

Hiram or the boatswain wanted me outside in the Dubo House, so that, whether I liked it or not, I had to go.

Ah Lee at these times would be on my track before I had well left the door, and go in with impassive smiles which nothing could disturb; when this happened I would have barely reached the platform of the Dubo House before I would see the captain rush out with maniac gestures and fly madly down the hill into the swampy gardens, where he would throw himself down with howls and savage curses which we could hear in the village.

The natives one and all venerated him as an incarnation of evil, bringing him presents, but avoiding him as much as they could.

One night the spirit-men came and gave a *séance* in the village; in a fit of devilry he yielded to their prayers that he would cast his evil eye upon their enemies. A tribe which they had long been at war with was selected for his curses, so he dressed himself up in the masks with the others, and as they prophesied, he cursed as I had heard him cursing once before on the night of the fire at sea.

The natives shrieked with mad fury against the tribe whom they intended to attack when fair weather set in, as they saw the wild freedom of his gestures, and heard his words, although they did not comprehend the meaning; this was all the better, for it was considered an incantation from the spirit of darkness who was on their side; they did not see his face, for it was hidden by the grotesque mask, but I could fancy it as it appeared once before glowing with the electricity of that satanic glee. The seven devils had full swing that night, and the little angel of love was crushed

under their cloven hoofs, while the great fires flared and sputtered as the rain fell over the weird scene.

All that night he lay in the wet gardens; and Ah Lee slept before the door of the women's hut, where Mrs. Wilmore shivered with horror, and prayed for the unhappy wretch who was torturing himself and her to death.

And a wilder thunderstorm came on than usual, rattling through the valleys and blazing from the clouds, while the rain poured like a deluge, and many trees came down with loud crashes, as if his curses had evoked all the wicked spirits of the air, and sent them riding through the land on their fire-cars.

Next day we found him in the wet gardens helpless and raving with the fever, which had felled some of the others, and we bore him into the fever hut, where Mrs. Wilmore constituted herself his nurse along with Ah Lee and myself.

* * * * *

Two great events occurred in the Dubo House during the time we were there, and which caused a fever of excitement and talk throughout the village: Mocha, the female monkey, became the happy mother of twins, making thereby her master, Zeno, a very proud man indeed, and the little Persian cat almost mad with jealousy, even though she almost daily expected some of her own.

A little boy and girl, which the fond mother nursed and dandled on her knees just like a miniature human beings.

The natives came in droves, particularly the female portion, and spent hours in the rain, watching her wonderful motions, as she squatted within the doorway with her progeny; while pussy sat over against

her, sulkily glaring at them, and making herself twice her natural size with her bad temper.

There she sat, swollen with rage, and making herself very ugly with envy and narrowness, taking no notice of any one who stroked her, but lowering upon the maternal bliss of that apish mother, who paid no other attention to her evil looks than by snapping at her when she attempted to come too close to her young.

Mocha was the heroine of the hour, and helped to make time pass with her queer antics. She held the babies up to every one to see; and chattered with delight when we praised them up.

Then, before puss quite burst, like the envious toad, her own turn came and she was consoled. One morning she seemed to lay aside all her spleen, and passed over to the other extreme of love and gentleness, rubbing herself against all our legs, with arching back and curling tail, and short purring mews; not even neglecting Madame Mocha in her affectionate recognition. After which she retired to the curved inside of a war-shield, which she had chosen as a bed, and increased the population by five little tiger-striped blind mongrels. And then she seemed contented with her lot in life, when she saw that she could show five against her rival's two. And it is a curious mother who is not satisfied with her own productions, no matter how ugly they may appear to the eyes of outsiders.

By day, the men who were not fever-stricken used to lounge about the village and smoke their pipes, or take lessons in betel-nut chewing, or the sucking of the bau-bau or native pipe. When they walked about they were mostly accompanied by the male portion of the natives; while the females, whether by choice or according to the law of the country, were kept most rigidly out of

the way; and I observed dark glances of displeasure and jealousy cross the faces of the men if any of the sailors tried to speak to or even smile at the women; all except the gentle Ah Lee, who, with smooth face and long pig-tail, appeared to break down all barriers. The girls and married women laughed and jested with him, pulling him about as they liked, without any of the men objecting, either by word or look. These non-cannibal savages seemed to like the Chinaman as much as their more ferocious coast countrymen had done.

The dog and pelican also came in for their share of attention, even if in most instances not quite in a flattering degree of notoriety. Grip prowled about through every hut in his search after loot. No place was sacred to him, as nothing came amiss to his rapacity; and no matter how close a watch they set upon him, his cunning overmatched guile. He was the wiliest of the wily, the most mendacious of the mendacious, and feared no more the spear-thrusts than he had done the butcher's knife.

Sometimes it would be a sucking pet pig, which one of the young matrons was nursing along with her own baby. Grip would steal unobserved into the hut, and, lying down in a shady corner, wait patiently until the mother had laid down her own baby and adopted sucking-pet to sleep together; then, as she turned round to gossip with a neighbour, the villain robber crept forward, and, lifting out the dainty morsel, suddenly leapt out to the open with his victim squealing wildly, and half the outraged women following with their husbands' clubs and spears, with blood-curdling screams, which made us all think we were attacked by an enemy.

A vain chase generally, for Grip seldom relinquished his prey ; and if he did drop it, his friend the pelican was near at hand to pick it up and bolt it at a gulp.

Grip was the thief of the village; while the pelican acted as receiver.

They went together, the dog and the pelican, forming a mute partnership of guilt for interest only. That is, Grip had all the risk, and his partner half of the gain.

One morning, we were all sitting, smoking or telling stories, round the mats whereon Mr. Coffin and the sick men lay. It had been a hard night with Edward Coffin, for he had been delirious and raving horribly; living over again old scenes of violence and bloodshed, and cursing at the ghosts of the past; showing to us scenes which made my hair rise up with horror, alternated with passionate declarations of love to Mrs. Wilmore, or whimpering appeals for her pity. A terrible night, during which some of the men had to hold him down; while Mrs. Wilmore listened, with pallid open lips or scarlet cheeks of shame.

He was worse when she went away from him; so that we had to go often for her, tired out as she was, for, even in his wildest fit of delirium, her cool hand laid upon his brow seemed to soothe him and calm the fire within. It was as if the devils were exorcised by her touch.

The fever had passed away, and he now lay exhausted, with great hollow eyes, which stared up at the thatch roof like fathomless pools reflecting the darkness overhead. The flesh was wasted from his bones; so that his once robust and shapely body lay now like a gaunt skeleton with the bones protruding. The great black beard and massive locks were tumbled and

tangled, while the large features were drawn and pinched like the features of a famished giant; a deep melancholy in the eyes and face, which brought the tears to our eyes as we looked at him.

"What is there to believe in, if we don't believe in luck?" said Zeno, who was answering one of the others, who had been scoffing at good and bad luck. "Why, I don't believe there's a man about who has had more narrow squeaks than I have had in my life; and I believe I will be able to tell beforehand when my last voyage comes.

"Once in America I was going on a train journey, and just as I was about to step aboard a friend stopped me, saying, 'Have a liquor before you start.' 'Have I got time, old chum?' says I. 'Loads of time,' says he. So in we goes to the refreshment bar, to get a parting glass. And blow me, if that 'ere train didn't start off afore her time, leaving me gaping on the station.

"Wall, boys, I cussed a few, for there was no other train till next day, but could do nothing else than make a night of it; and so much of a night, that next morning I woke up in a back yard, with all my money and clothes gone, and nothing about by way of covering except an old sugar-barrel, into which I got, after knocking out the bottom, and so managed to pilot myself down to the ship, like a Chinese state prisoner."

"An' do ye call that luck?" observed Hiram contemptuously.

"The best o' luck, as you will hear. When I got once more into a pair of pants and shirt, and was thinking over the matter with a pipe, I heard a newsboy go past, shouting, 'Great Railway Accident. Train wrecked, and passengers all killed.' I bought

that paper with a copper borrowed from our steward, and saw that the train I was about to start with had run over a bridge, and not a soul escaped to tell the yarn."

"That reminds me of an escape I once had with a ship, where a street row saved me," said one of the sailors. "It was in Melbourne; and I had shipped on a steamer to go to Sydney. And as I was on the way to Sandgate, just by the post office in Burke Street, I saw two fellows start fighting, which, of course, I pushed forward to see. The row had begun in a pub close by, when one of the chaps, an insignificant grub of a fellow, hit the other, a strapping young Scotchman, in the eye with his pewter pot; and before he could recover from the blow, pounced on him and began to maul him. They had both rolled out of the door when I got up, and were worrying on the pavement.

"I could see that the young fellow was dazed with the treacherous smash of the pewter, with the blood running over his cheeks from the cut in his eyebrow; while the little scrub was a-top of him, gnawing away at his ear like a darned cannibal. I like fair play, always, and could see from the crowd of roughs that the young fellow was a stranger, and that the rest wor set against him. So, being a good weight, without more ado I made a seat of the scrub's body, and, coming down plump, drove the wind out, and stopped his chawing all of a sudden.

"Lor! I have seen black fellows fight squarer than this; and arter I thought they were both handicapped alike, I was getting up, when forrard comes a patrol of the police and marched us all up to chockie.

"Well, I got ten days and missed my trip, though

it warn't much of a miss, for the coaster went ashore half way, and out o' six hundred aboard only five were saved."

"Yes," responded Zeno, "it may be an extra glass, or a black eye, but we've got to be grateful for it all the same, if it saves our lives. A thought once saved me at the last moment, when my foot was on the gangway of a schooner going to the South Seas, and I didn't go aboard, and so saved my life, for that schooner was never heard of more."

"What was the thought?" we all inquired eagerly.

"Well, boys, it sounds foolish, but I never could stand green and red alongside. The skipper was an Irishman, and had painted his craft green, but getting ashamed of the national colour, as Irishmen sometimes will do aboard as at home, he had barred it up with vermilion stripes. I was just on the gangway when the green and red caught my eye, and began dancing together before me, making me quite sea-sick with the mixture. Darn me if I go aboard, says I to myself, and I didn't."

"I remember once," said another of the men, a quiet-faced fellow, with soft features and blue eyes, "being in New Zealand; we had been in the King's country, and going back to Auckland with a chum, the wet season was on, and we had a long tramp of it through the bush with slushy tracks and heavy rains pouring down; we had tramped over fifteen miles that day, and were not very dry or comfortable, as you may justly suppose, when we came to the side of the bay over against the town, where the ferry-boat was kept. There's a public just by the landing-place, so we turned in to have a drink, when the time might have been three, or perhaps four o'clock in the after-

noon. When we got to the bar there was only an old woman there serving. 'Has the boat gone yet?' we axed of her.

"'Yes, my sons,' says she, 'a good two hours ago.'

"'When will it be back, mother?'

"'Not for another three hours at any rate, my soneys,' says she, 'what can I serve you with?'

"'Brandy neat, old lady.'

"Brandy at that time was the only liquor axed for by colonials, they takes a run on a special brand, and doctors and all recommends it, and no matter though it was paraffin oil, if the medical faculty gives the tip, it would be the only brand axed for."

"Lor, I knows that well," said one of the other men, corroborating the stock of fashionable drinks. "I remember once sitting in a bush shanty, where all the drink had been used up, when a gay young buck of a new chum comes in, and says he,—

"'Landlord, a nobbler of your best brandy, and quick.'

"'I hain't got any brandy, boss.'

"'Whisky then will do.'

"'I hain't got any whisky either, boss.'

"'Well hollands, old tom, rum, anything cool and tasty.'

"'I hain't got any of those brands on board jist now, boss.'

"'What have you got to drink?'

"'The only liquor as I have at present left is a five-gallon jar of kerosene, but that has been recommended as being in prime condition by our doctor here.'

"'Ah! dash it all, a fellow can't drink kerosene, you know, landlord.'

"'Well, all as I've got to say, young man, is that you are too blooming particular for this establishment; there are two gents in my back parlour at this moment drinking one another's health in Brown's Meltonian Blacking!'

"Ah, that ain't true, Jerry, you know."

"True as I'm a-sitting here, boys; but go on with your yarn, Tom."

"Well," resumed Tom, clearing his throat, "she served us to a good tot of brandy apiece, and went out to light a fire to dry us while we waited. I made a gulp at mine, and before I tasted that it had a peculiar flavour, half of it was down.

"Not so my companion, however, he only smelt his and set it down again.

"'Don't drink that, Tom, it's drugged.'

"'I've had half of it already, Jack,' says I.

"'Then do as I do with the rest.'

"He emptied his glass on to the floor amongst the sawdust, as I did with mine, and set the empty glasses up as if we had drunk them.

"In comes the old landlady, with a grin on her withered jaws when she saw the glasses empty. 'Come into the parlour, where the fire is, and dry yourselves while you wait.'

"'No, thank you, mother,' said Jack calmly.

"'Do, Jack,' said I, feeling all at once most mightily sleepy; 'let's go in and have a rest.'

"'Oh, there's a couple of sofas, there sonnys, where you can lie down, and I'll let you know when the boat comes in.'

"'Have you any one in the house, mother?' asked Jack.

"'Not a living soul except myself, sonny; I've just

lost my help, and the men folk have all gone to Auckland."

"'Come outside, Tom,' said Jack suddenly, his voice sounding a far way off; and in spite of the old woman's pressing, along with my own, for to go into the parlour, he marched me outside to the rain and up and down the beach as hard as I could peg.

"'Let me lie down a moment, Jack, I feel almost dead beat.'

"'No, Tom, you must walk; d'ye see over by the barn door?'

"I looked, with a haze afore my eyes, and could just make out what looked like a man's head round the corner, peeping like out at us. 'What is it, Jack?'

"'Two of as downy-looking skunks as ever I saw, watching till we fall asleep. Out with your barker, Tom, and show them we are armed.'

"I pulled out my pistol, and held it slackly in my hand, while he dragged me on up and down, with a couple of hundredweight, as it felt, on each of my feet.

"For three mortal hours we trudged up and down that sand in front of the rough waters, with the daylight slowly fading, and no signs of the boat.

"At last we saw it, just as night was almost upon us, and after a hard fight with the wind and waves, we landed at the wharf of Auckland, and got into a respectable hotel, where Jack put me to bed, to wake up next morning with a splitting head.

"Two or three weeks after that the papers were filled up with an account of some awful murders which had taken place near the ferry, murders supposed to be done by the Maories, for the bodies were found

stripped and hacked into little pieces, scattered about the bush.

"Jack and I looked at one another when we heard of it, and we had our own thoughts about who the murderers were, though we said nothing, having no proofs to bring forward; the Maories get the blame of a lot of bad actions, like the lodging-house cat."

At this moment, while we were still listening to Tom's narrative, we were all startled by a terrible outcry from the square.

"Grip at his usual exercise, I guess," said Hiram, getting on to his feet, and, with the aid of his stick, hobbling outside, where we all rushed who were able to run.

Yes, it was the notorious thief and housebreaker running from the chief's house with his booty, a fine fat, young, long-nosed pig, who gave forth some screeches awful in their shrill intensity, swelled out by a chorus of enraged screams from the pursuing women, while their husbands stood in the doorways and cursed in deep tones the skulking marauder.

By the side of Grip, and a little way in advance, scuttled the equally guilty pelican, both making off as fast as they could towards the gardens.

As they had to pass us on their road, we had just time to spread ourselves out, so as to intercept them before the pelican was upon us, knocking down the sailor who stood before him, and both rolling over one another amongst the mud.

But Grip wasn't to be caught so easily, for as the pelican tripped over the sailor, he turned abruptly, and dashing between the legs of half a dozen of the advance female guard, sending them to right and left, with

their heels in the air, he dodged down by the side of the Dubo House and made off.

The pelican by this time had picked himself up, and, after a few dazed shakes of his long bill, once more made off round the houses, to where the shrill screeches of the pig betrayed the whereabouts of his friend; so, leaving those who had fallen to get up the best way they could, we all ran after the pelican, on vengeance bent.

Past the village and down the hill ran the dastardly pair, with half of the village almost at their heels; through the gardens, all slush, and broken down with the rains.

A wild stampede, while in our excitement we broke through palisades, and smashed down the young yams and taro-beds, doing far more damage than the dog, pelican, and pig were worth.

We chased the pair for about fully a mile. Grip gave signs of failing; then, seeing no chance of escape, he suddenly dropped his load and stood suddenly still — so suddenly that we all rolled over his fat body and each other, with great difficulty saving ourselves, by clutching at the grass-tufts, from going over the edge of the precipice.

Before we had time to recover ourselves, the screeches from the little pig had ceased; and when we once more got up and could look about us, neither Grip nor the pig could be seen. Had the crafty hound picked him up again, after tripping us, and made off once more up or down the hill?

The pelican was there, with his tails towards us, making convulsive motions with his back, as if he was choking with suppressed laughter at our mishap, and had turned himself from us on purpose to enjoy the fun

all the more unobserved, and then the truth burst upon us; he was attempting to swallow the unfortunate squeaker.

In a trice we were upon the scoundrel, clutching at his long legs and short wings and ungainly body, while one of the men hung on to and tried to force open his huge bill.

Yes, there was unmistakably something large inside his pocket, or rather being forced half-way down his throat, and then disgorged into the pocket, after a frantic choking, which seemed nearly to dislocate his entire body.

The sucking-pig! As the sailor forced open the beak, one shrill squeak from the inside announced the truth without any mistake, and the next moment, by aid of a fist and arm from Hiram, who came up at the moment, delivered the graceless pelican of his unnatural meal, which Hiram handed back to its loving owner, a good deal the worse for the wear and tear, but still alive, and awaking the afternoon echoes with its ear-splitting cries.

Such a slobbering and kissing took place, as the young matron took back her maltreated pet and laid it once more against her dusky bosom, where it lay whimpering as it greedily drew in the soothing fluid.

Then, with the rosy shafts of the setting sun darting above the purple mists of the valleys on our left side, the first real sun effect we had seen for weeks, we began our march up the hill once more, with the long-legged criminal bringing up the rear.

Sunset and twilight follow in quick succession in New Guinea. From our present height we still had light, while darkness reigned in the valleys; yet,

before half of our return journey was over, it took us all our time to pick our footsteps, and we were forced to let the natives go first, and follow as best we could.

"Hallo! what's that?" shouted Hiram, stopping of a sudden to listen.

"They are shooting from the village; quick, boys! let's up and help."

Four or five quick shots broke upon the obscurity, and then, as we still ran on breathlessly, a bright flame flared up above the bananas and mammy-apple-trees in the gardens.

The women shrank to the rear at the sight, while we plucked from their nerveless hands the clubs and weapons they had brought with them, and upwards we rushed, frantic with excitement and dread.

Nearer, the village seemed to be in a blaze; past the broken-down palisades, and then we were in the thick of it.

A swarm of copper-coloured demons filling the square, now a burning mass, with their black shadows leaping up and down as they advanced or retired.

At the door of the Dubo House, Ah Lee and the boatswain, with Zeno, fighting with fury against a crowd of stalwart warriors, shooting, clubbing, and smashing out with their fists.

Ah Lee, in the excitement of the contest, had, at the moment we appeared, pitched his brace of pistols at the heads of two of the foremost, and now, making a battering-ram of his head, was rushing forward and butting at his enemies, knocking the wind out of them at every shock, and bowling them over like wickets. The old chief, with some of his fighting men, laying on like Trojan heroes; for they were fighting for their homes and flesh, and no such thing as surrender

could be thought upon: it was victory or torturing death.

At the door of the sick-hut I saw Captain Coffin, too weak to stand upright, leaning to steady himself against the post, like a gaunt spectre; yet firing shot after shot from pistol and rifle into the masses; pitching the weapons into the dark as he fired, to be loaded for him, and getting them again almost as fast as he could fire.

A white, fragile arm gleamed out of the dark into the fire-light now and then, as it handed the loaded weapons out to him, and I thrilled with pride as I recognized the worn arm of our fair lady, Mrs. Wilmore; she was working like a man for life and honour.

Even Grip had redeemed his shame; for we saw him on the ground with a huge warrior under him, both intermingling, with the blood from the native's throat spouting out as the strong white teeth gnawed and worried. In peace, this hound was a disgrace to doghood; but in an emergency of danger, we could always depend upon him to do his duty.

We noted these points of the battle as we approached, with our cheers and yells mixing, putting new life into our friends, and spreading consternation amongst the foes. I suppose they had lain in ambush, waiting on the night to come, when this unlucky episode of the dog and pelican had inspired them with the idea to attack at once.

Before this I had often wondered how soldiers ever got up courage to fight and face the deadly bullets and cruel steel; now I wondered no more; the courage had come upon me like a flash, at the sight of the yellow flames and tossing figures, with that dear lady in danger; not courage, but blind fury, and an utter

disregard of pain. I had only one desire, and that was to rush at them and kill if I could.

I cannot tell more of the battle until it was over, as that hurried glance was the last I saw of it; next moment I was rushing with the others straight on, and stabbing with my spear and sheaf-knife right and left. I only looked for a naked skin, somewhat darker than my own and lighter than our dusky friends, to plant my weapon in it, and feel the rush of warm fluid fall over me.

My spear broke off in the first body it entered, but I saw him fall; then the splintered end I plunged and left in another; after which I lunged right and left with my knife, as I rushed onwards towards the sick hut.

I escaped from the engagement without a wound, although taking no care to ward off blows. I merely dashed on and struck it into what came before me, caring only to reach the side of Captain Coffin and the noble woman who was helping him to defend the place.

When I reached it the battle was over, and all of the enemy who could run had fled into the darkness, leaving their dead and wounded lying behind them, and the natives were now busy despatching all who were not quite killed.

I counted five houses in a blaze; but, the night being quiet, the flames rose straight up and contented themselves with the huts in which they had been lit, smouldering and smoking as they reached the damp thatch, and finally dying out, without much damage, but leaving a heavy pall overhead.

In the square the slain were lying pell-mell in all positions: those shot direct, curved backwards, like a bow reversed; those speared, lying in writhing

positions; while those clubbed had fallen prone upon their faces. The most horrid sight of all was the stalwart victim of the dog Grip.

When I reached the sick-hut I found Captain Coffin all in a heap by the doorway, with a fired rifle still in his grasp. At first I thought he was dead; but as I could see no marks of wounds, and no stains of blood on his pijamas, I dragged him on to his mat, and left him there to recover, as I felt he would, and turned about to look for Mrs. Wilmore, feeling surprised that I did not see her.

"Mrs. Wilmore, are you there?"

No reply.

"Mrs. Wilmore! Mrs. Wilmore!" I ran about, crying her name, through the hut, through the square, through all the other houses, but she was not to be seen or heard, and no one could tell me anything about her, she had gone, but where?

Ah Lee was also absent, so too Jabez Carter, Grip the hound, and Mocha with her twins.

I think I went half crazed after this, for I rushed about, turning over the dead bodies wildly, and shouting out, "Mrs. Wilmore, where are you?" and no one responded to my frantic cries.

It was my voice which penetrated to the brain of Edward Coffin, and woke him up from his heavy swoon.

And when he grasped my meaning that she was lost, the fever seemed to fall from him like a veil, and he became once more the energetic, determined and vengeful man that he had been, but with none of his old recklessness.

We ran round together, looking eagerly for some trace by the lurid light of the expiring fires; at one

part on the outskirts of the village, leading upwards, we found a strip of her light dress, which he pounced upon, and, after kissing it passionately, put it into his breast.

"Now, Johnny, we know where she has gone, and must follow. Come back, lad, and get ready."

He stalked over, gaunt and pallid, with his beard and hair flying behind him, to the fire now before the Dubo House, where the chief and his fighting-men were assembled along with our fellows. "Wapira, where are the tribe who have taken her?"

"Over the mountains at the other side."

"Can you guide us to them?"

"Yes, to-morrow, when it is light to see."

"No! no!! to-night, now!"

He threw out his arms and stamped his foot with the old imperious gesture.

"You are not well enough to fight," said the chief soothingly; "and they are very crafty and cruel, they will make meat of us all, if we go to-night."

"I am better, and shall not be ill again while there is one man amongst them left to kill. Oh, my God! my God! give me but strength enough to save that precious life, and then take my worthless carcase, if you will."

He tossed up his head and arms towards the starlit sky as he prayed this terrible compact with the Almighty, standing for a moment in this position, and then, as if he had heard his prayers answered, he turned round to his crew.

"Boys, will any of you go with me to-night?"

"Of course, mate, we'll all go if you want it!"

It was Hiram Coster who spoke, but the rest of the men showed by their actions that he had only uttered their sentiments.

"Then off, and arm yourselves and pack up what we need without the loss of a moment. This is a war to the death."

"If you go to fight with my enemies, then will I also go, and my fighting-men with me," said the old chief, starting up, seized with the infectious enthusiasm.

In another hour we were ready, and, leaving the women and sick men behind, struck out in the dark on that upward trail.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE WAR-TRAIL.

HOW this mighty engrossment had transfigured our leader as he strode on through the bush that night, with the native guides in front, and we keeping pace behind him!

There was a rapt expression upon his worn features as we left the flame-lighted village, which seemed to ennoble them and impart new strength to his fever-attenuated limbs, for he strode on apparently without fatigue all through the hours of darkness, while we panted after him, and when the morning dawned I could see the same lofty resolve still stamped upon the care-drawn brow, giving him the sort of look which I suppose the enthusiastic crusaders must have worn when setting out for Jerusalem, or that modern example of these olden Christian heroes, General Gordon, must have worn during the last days of Khartoum, an intense setting of the muscles and nerves, as if the will had triumphed over the weakness of the flesh, mingled with a melancholy gravity, as if joy and hope had departed for ever. There was a glow over the worn features and a flashing of the eye, which was no longer baleful as of old, although as bright and penetrating, but it was no longer electric and shifting, but steadfast and

glowing, which drew me to him as I had never been drawn before, no matter how great his former influence over me had been.

I felt a thrill of admiration unmixed as I looked upon that strangely illumined face, a throb of pity for the story of pain and self-abnegation which it expressed, a confidence in the power and courage revealed in every line, in the firm down-setting of the feet and the nervous clutching of the rifle. We must do something great, with such a man to lead us into action.

What he had been vanished from my mind like a shadow; through the valley of death he had passed, dropping his burden by the way amongst the skulls; from the gate of hell he had turned, leaving his seven familiars to skulk inside to their own proper quarters; and now the habitation which they had so long desecrated was left for the angel to clean up and mend, as best it could; it was a wrecked heart, like a gutted ship being towed into harbour.

I had an instinctive feeling, that the passion which made him so recklessly boisterous was burnt out, and would never be kindled any more, and that we would never hear that wild laughter again, for which I felt almost sorry; of course in my youth, I did not reason all this out as I do now, yet I felt it all, as the child or dog feels the mood of its master by instinct.

Yes, he was my master, I now felt; the man who could draw my whole heart after him. Mr. Wilmore I had trusted and admired for his nobility and goodness, but Edward Coffin was the hero of my life, the man of all men who could claim the devotion of my life; to fight and even die by his side, now that the cause was good, seemed a boon that any boy might be proud to win.

I think he must have read my sympathy and devotion, for as we sat down to rest on the top of the mountain, he put his hand upon my shoulders and smiled upon me, so gently, so sadly, that the tears gushed into my eyes, and, with the impulse of the dog licking his master's hand, I seized it and covered it with my kisses.

"We'll save her yet, Johnny, won't we?"

It was like the rumbling of an organ, the voice which uttered the words from his throat, husky with emotion but rich as cathedral music, without a trace of the rasp which used to make my flesh creep when I heard the deep tones of old.

We were sitting a little apart from the others, our men making a fire to boil their billie, and the natives squatting passively and watching the sun rise from the mist far below us.

Where we had camped, the height must have been at least 5000 feet above the sea, on the crest of the hill, and the rest of the way led down the mountains.

A golden sun which broke through the rose-tinted layers of mist-clouds and scattered the airy figments to right and left, some flying off in purple shadow, and others like flecks of gold, with the warm tones of the upper space.

As the clouds were torn aside we could see peaks of other ranges peering out abruptly and closing in again like islands on a cream-tinted ocean, the promise of a glowing day of heat all about us, with the keen smell of frost in the air.

"Have you forgiven me, my lad, for leaving you on that burning deck?"

"Do not think of it, sir," said I, with a burst of emotion.

"Ah! but I must think of it, Johnny, and a host of

other dastardly deeds, and worse intentions ; they crawl upon me, and will crowd about me like a plague of locusts all my life, darkening my heart with the shadow of their ugly bodies, and keeping the sun off until I die."

What could I say to all this ?

"What I have done, Johnny, cannot be wiped out, it must stay with me, now that my eyes are opened for ever. Ah! my lad, keep on the right road, no matter how thorny it looks, for it is easier to tread it when the light shines to show you the pitfalls than it is to walk in the dark by experience only.

"I have done many bad deeds in my life, but the worst is the one I was not allowed to do, which stings me with its non-fulfilment, even while I regret my defeat. I can fight and die, if need be, but I cannot control my regret."

He was looking with deep-set, melancholy eyes at the glorious phantasmagoria of colour in front of us, and I felt that what he was saying required no reply from me.

"White souls which seek the light, dark sins which fly towards the valley! Come, Johnny, we must get down and save the woman whom we both love, and after that, perhaps I may find peace."

He rose abruptly, and looked once more at the sky for some moments in silence, while the men and natives, taking his action as a sign once more to be on the march, hastily swallowed their scalding tea and struck the camp.

I had very little more appetite than my leader for breakfast this morning, for my heart was filled with miserable forebodings and anxieties as to the fate of the captives, whether they had been put to death on the way for conveniency in travelling; alive, we all hoped

they were, even while we feared the worst with an enemy so remorseless and savage.

One item of information regarding the habits of this tribe gave us slight hopes of being in time to rescue them, they were cannibals who liked to cook their victims alive; spending some time in preparing their roast for the stake, they were in the habit of feeding them up, providing the larder was not too empty, for some days with certain herbs, so as to give the flesh a particular flavour, but if hurried by thought of pursuit or starvation, then, like a great many more, they just cooked it as it came to hand in the readiest fashion.

At the present time, we had this advantage on our side, that they would not expect such a speedy retaliation; for, if left to themselves, natives would never dream of starting directly on the heels of their enemies; they have oracles to consult, feasts to observe, omens to watch for, and long discussions to get through, before the war-path is taken. Captain Coffin, in his own impulsive way, had dispensed with all these preliminaries, and although the natives grumbled and shook their heads over the unwonted expedition, still they had too much admiration for and faith in their new allies to hang back from the revenge which he had promised to them.

The enemy had one hour's clear start of us, with the advantage of knowing their ground thoroughly, for although the natives were sure-footed, quick-sighted guides, they were forced to scout ahead at intervals during the night, and proceed cautiously in case of an ambush; so that, in spite of all our impatience, we were compelled to pause often and wait for the return of our guides before we could resume our ascent.

Also the natives, with that reticence which was one of

their characteristics, never took the trouble to apprise us of gaps or fissures up that rocky way ; we had to keep closely behind and imitate their motions as best we could, creeping where they crept, stepping out swiftly when they did so, leaping, without knowing where we leapt, when they made the spring, and take our chance as to the width of the chasms over which we bounded time after time in the dark.

Sometimes a chill damp blast came up from under our feet and blew our hair aside as we paused on the brink to make the leap, proving the fearful depth of the fissure; sometimes it was narrower than we had estimated, so that when we made the spring with all our might, we landed against the soft warm skins of some of our guides, giving us, besides the momentary horror that we had touched an enemy, such a rebound that it was only by frantic clutches that we were prevented from rolling back into that gusty abyss. At times we heard loud rumblings and roarings of great waterfalls, hundreds of feet below us, while upwards vapour of chill spray made us shiver with cold and the terror which the unknown ever causes, and which only the enthusiasm of our object and British pluck enabled us to brave.

We went on in perfect silence through the night, and hailed that dawn with grateful hearts, for now we could see where we were going.

As we were about to resume our march, one of the young men rushed forward for a few paces, and, kneeling down, examined the moist ground.

"White woman still alive ! see ?" We came over to where he knelt, and saw on the soft soil, where he pointed, a number of footprints.

Flat soles of natives, making broad and shapeless

tracks, and amongst them six distinct footprint
which were suggestive of home.

Two small prints following along at short interval
one a slipper print, with minute heel, and the othe
of a slender naked foot.

"Misse Wilmore loss her shoe, they sit her dow
here to walk a while, also set down Ah Lee and Jabe
no walk far, too slow, so pick them all up over there.

The native ran and pointed to where, about a hu
dred feet further down, they had picked up the
prisoners again.

Ah Lee's unmistakable wooden-soled shoe, with th
nailed bluchers of Jabez, spoke for themselves, the
were all alive, and all being taken so to the village.

The lately healed leg of Jabez had been too sti
and slow-going for the patience of the savages, so tha
they must have lifted them again and hurried on.

Captain Coffin, regardless of the others, stoope
down and kissed the naked footprint passionately
then rose with a new hope in his eyes.

"We will save them yet; on, lads, on!"

But, however much we were inclined to hurry o
there were too many obstacles in the way for us to ge
along quickly; there were places where the entangle
ment of brush-wood grew so closely that we had t
crawl on hands and knees to get through them, fo
this side of the mountain, declining towards the inlan
and facing the north, was much more luxuriant than th
south side.

Then at times we would come to a precipice full
1000 feet before the huge cedar-tree tops me
the down-looking eye, with cliffs perpendicular an
almost smooth, over which there was no climbing
and along the ridge of which we had to creep

with bushes covering our bodies, for fear of being seen by watchful eyes in the valley, for where we crept with the clear ambient sky behind us, we could be seen for miles by any one below.

Then we would crawl as our guides were doing, lying low and stopping at parts to reconnoitre, until we came to a part where the valley narrowed so that we could either leap or cut down a tree to make a bridge, over which we wriggled like so many worms, destroying our bridge after we had passed.

In this fashion we went on till mid-day, when the blazing downpour of that tropic sun, with our tiresome toiling, made us all call a halt for a few moments.

The air was swimming in heat fumes, with gaseous vapours rising blue and purply from the valleys, while in front of us rose mountain peaks rugged and shadowy, with snow-white clouds nestling against their rough breasts like cherubs cuddling in to towering giants.

Peaks of amber and russet, with velvety shadows of vast hollows and gorges, glistening patches where the lately charged waterfalls rolled tumultuously over great boulders, glimmerings of emerald where the sun-rays caught the fresh lavish vegetation, with indications of pure colour where the clusters of orchids and tropical flower-world revealed themselves.

We had paused on a plateau, overlooking a delicious valley 2000 feet below our resting-place, a level bed of fresh green young grass, with a perfect galaxy of glowing colour intermixing with the young blades like a rare garden.

Some of these were flowers and other patches of richest hue, gorgeous and gigantic butterflies, which fluttered about, crossing one another with prismatic

flashes as they gloated below the sunshine and sported amongst the flowers.

Along the valley rolled a broad river like a bright azure blue ribbon, between fertile banks and breaks of grass, smoothly carrying its liquid volume to the sea, and wending towards the north until we lost sight of it in the roundings of the great cliffs.

From where we stood the cliffs rose level as a wall for over 1300 feet, a fearsome height to look over into that trembling vagueness of deep green and atmospheric blue.

Sailing lazily on wide wings, we watched a golden-plumaged vulture float above that trembling ocean of green and purple; with no apparent purpose, he floated on seemingly motionless pinions, until he passed from our range, like the river.

Captain Coffin on this place had found a treasure in the other deck slipper which Mrs. Wilmore must have dropped as they bore her swiftly along. I saw him push it quickly into the breast of his pijama, as if he feared other eyes would see it, while the veins in his forehead stood out like blue cords.

"Half way down this cliff there is a great cave which will take us by a quick way through the mountain," said the old chief, as we rested.

"Could they take that road with their burdens?" asked Captain Coffin anxiously, in the native tongue, of which we had all learnt a good deal.

"No, they would have to go down to the river, which twists round by the east after a while, and go that way with their canoes. I do not think they know about this cave, as my father found it out once by chance when he was out hunting."

"And do we gain much by this?"

"Yes, five hours at least."

"Then let us take that way, and we may cut them off."

"It is very dark and awful, and few people can get through it for the air is bad."

"Have you been through it, father?"

"Yes, years ago."

"And you lived all right?"

"I am here to tell you so!"

"Then we will take the near cut, no matter how dark it may be."

The chief rose without a word, and led the way out of that flower and insect bespangled hollow, and along the precipitous cliffs as they gradually sloped downwards.

After about half an hour's walking eastward, we came to a part where there appeared to have been a mighty landslip, the boulders stood out in broken masses, piled one on the top of the other, with slopes of yellow sand, clay and gravel lying loosely between the boulders and bushes, and with tendrils climbing over it all; before us still spread out the fertile valley, with the azure blue river still gliding on from the north to the south, and dusky shadows striking from sharp lights on the walls of rock on the other side, while above reared the grand outlines of hills, range beyond range, from the deep olive green and russet to the faintest indications of cerulean.

"We must go down here," said the old chief, slinging his shield and club over his back, and using his huge black palm spear as a stop stick.

Down the sloping side of loose *débris* he slid, sending avalanches of sand and stones rattling over the rocks amongst the dense carpet of leafage so far below, from which rose clouds of bird life, chattering

loudly at the unusual disturbance as they flew from their shady nests over the tops of the trees—white square patches of cockatoos, with gaudy-winged parrots, birds of paradise, lumbering along like pheasants, with ruddy tails and brown velvet necks, to drop soon out of sight amidst the green again.

As we slid after our guide, those behind covered us with the sand and stuff they dislodged, so that it felt as if they were patting our backs.

Every few yards we were arrested by the boulders imbedded in the earth or tripped up by snake-like roots, at which we clutched and held on till they were uprooted and came away in our hands.

We could see that this path had not been used for years, for as we looked behind us we could trace our trail like a broad bald slide, with the broken tendrils quivering on each side, while in front of us it was all undisturbed.

Over the boulders we could climb easily, covered as they were with the tenacious roots and tendrils of creepers and vines, which we used as ropes as we dropped over.

At length, when about a third of the way down, the chief turned on a narrow ledge, which led southward along the brow of a wall-like cliff, holding on as he crawled to the vines on our inner side; a narrow and uncertain ledge, that required a steady head to traverse without becoming giddy, for in places it could not be more than six inches wide, with a clear drop of over 200 feet into the dense forest.

After going along this dizzy pathway for about 600 yards, it suddenly terminated in a cleft, where another convulsion of nature had split up the rocks in all directions.

The chief paused for a moment to look about him; below us, at about four feet from where we stood, lay an outreaching mass of broken rocks, spanning the gorge, as if they had been arrested in their fall, a rugged bridge, making a dark archway, which seemed to lead right into the heart of the mountain.

The chief reached down his spear until it touched the rocks below, then, lightly dropping from his perch by its aid, he landed safely, holding it for the others to come also.

By the aid of the spear we all followed, to find ourselves in front of a narrow aperture, through which only one could creep at a time.

"This is the dark passage that my father found, and which leads to the other side of the mountain."

"But how does the river go?" asked Mr. Coffin.

"About five miles further down it enters a dark gorge covered in at the top, and passes along that way till it comes out at the other side."

"But to reach the river from the top, how would they go?"

"As we were going before we turned off, for another three hours' march, then the way is easy down this side."

"So that we will gain time by going this way?"

"Half a day at least, if it is still open."

"Lead the way, then, and we will follow." The chief stooped down and pressed his bulky body through the aperture, the rest of us, with a last look on our gloomy surroundings, preparing to follow.

Far below we could hear the sound of rushing waters, a mountain tributary to that placid river, which foamed along its stony bed from that dark valley into the sun-laved one on the other side. We

could not see this torrent, because between us and it grew great trees, which started from the earth crevices and interlaced their branches and leaves below the archway.

Above us the sky was blue, and filled with radiance which bathed all the valley beyond, only leaving this place in deeper shadow and gloom.

A place like Dante's entrance to the inferno, with the brightness of hope leaving us at the threshold.

As I prepared to follow Mr. Coffin into the black hole through which he had disappeared, I looked over the side of the boulder on which we stood, and shuddered at the awful depth, and also at the sight of a large dark-looking snake which slid out of a crack in the rocks and slowly dropped its trailing length limply out of view.

Next moment I was creeping on all fours along a narrow passage, and touching the roof and sides as I crawled.

A most uneven entrance, not much wider in parts than an ordinary chimney, inclining slightly downwards, and with a decided curve towards the right, so that there was no room to turn about, and with the breaths of those going in front, and the others bringing up the rear, the heat was terrific, with a heavy odour like guano, the rising of long undisturbed dust which well-nigh overpowered me, so that I was not at all sorry when at length, without the slighest preparation, I was sent rolling head over heels into as soft a carpet of the dust and droppings of ages, as ever imagination could conceive.

For a moment or two I sputtered and coughed amongst the cloud that I had raised, and which mingled with huskily-uttered exclamations and oaths from

Hiram Coster and the boatswain in particular, as they also followed my example, and lay sprawling amongst the dust and darkness.

Knowing the squeeze I had in parts of that narrow passage, I wondered how ever that bulky pair had been able to jam themselves through.

"Have any of you lads got a box of lights about you?" I heard Mr. Coffin's voice ask.

"I have, when I can get at them," growled Hiram, as he rose and fumbled about his pockets, while I sat up and listened for the rubbing of the vesta against the box, amid a blackness which seemed almost palpable.

At last, after many rumblings of discontent on the part of Hiram, we had the satisfaction of seeing a faint light rise on the darkness, illuminating slightly the faces of the men ranged around—hot, flushed, and steaming faces, with streaks of black decorating them, which made them much more ferocious-looking than the ochre-streaked Papuans about us—at least they had their war-paint upon them, and looked prepared for the battle.

A general laugh at each other's expense broke simultaneously from all of us, when the light revealed our features; a chorus of hoarse guffaws, which woke slumbering echoes and sent them rolling onward in a ghastly, unearthly merriment, as it seemed, for miles into the bosom of the earth, as if a thousand imps were joining in and mocking at our attempt to penetrate their stronghold; while before the light and unusual noise we heard the flappings of hundreds of wings, the leather wings of frightened bats, as they woke from their deep sleep and tried to unhook their bloated bodies from the rough walls and arching roof.

"How many match-boxes can we muster amongst us?" inquired our leader.

Each of the men rummaged in his pockets and produced what he had—seven boxes in all—some more or less full, and all, as good fortune would have it, made of wax.

The boatswain also found in his deep trousers pocket a good piece of well-tarred rope-yarn, which Mr. Coffin hailed as a treasure.

"This will do, with care, to guide us through; but we must be careful of our matches."

With his knife he divided the yarn into equal lengths, and twisted each piece up stiffly; during which operation six of the matches were consumed.

"Now strike another and light this; we will see where we are."

As he spoke, and while the other match was being struck, he took out his spirit-flask and poured some of it over the impromptu torch; after which, applying the light, a bright blue flame sprang up, giving to us a little better view of the cave where we stood.

A large space, with overhanging rocks and irregular boulders for sides, about twenty feet high at the lowest point, and in width ranging from five to forty feet.

The light failed to illuminate some portions of the roof, which gaped blackly above us; while on the rocks about us, and overhanging sides, swung hundreds of thousands of half-wakened bats, of all sizes, with their heads downward, and flapping away with claw-divided wings. Some of these nearest let go their hold, and fluttered up into the impenetrable darkness above; but the others, furthest, merely flapped and swung, like clock pendulums.

About thirty feet inwards we could see, where the

inky blackness of space cut in upon the dusky shadow of bat-covered boulders, the opening which we were to take; the ground appearing smooth, being covered with the bat-droppings to a depth of two, and in parts three feet, which felt to the tread like fine, soft dust.

After a hasty look round, our leader blew out his torch, saying,—

"We must economize our light. Give me a box of matches; I'll light up as we require it."

As he spoke we all moved forward, mentally counting our steps till we again touched the rock, when another momentary illumination showed us some yards in advance of our way.

Rocks sloping upwards, still bat-clustered and of irregular height; in some parts the floor was level, then it would take a dip for some yards, to be again level.

Mostly we could walk upright, and sometimes two or three abreast; but at places we had to go single file, and creep on our knees, as at the entrance; but only once or twice had we so close a squeeze as at the entrance. What mostly surprised us in this subterranean passage was that the air was not nearly so foul as we had expected it to be; this appeared also to surprise the old chieftain, for he paused, and, sniffing up his breath, said, in his own guttural language,—

"In my father's time we could not breathe like this."

We had now reached a passage where the covering on the ground became thinner, so that our heels made a ringing sound on the rocks as we tramped over them. We now had a decided draught, which required great care in the lighting of the vestas.

"We are near an opening of some sort," said Coffin, as he plunged on after the chief.

Again the ground took a dip, while the floor lay under our feet like rude steps,—a natural corridor, of about four feet in width, and reaching out of range of our fugitive torch.

"Ugh!"

A deep grunt came from the chief, followed by a sudden exclamation from our leader under our feet; and before I could stop I had gone over the last step, nearly dislocating my ankles in the fall, and dropping upon my knees amongst water, which splashed coldly in my face.

Hiram, Zeno, and the others stopped in time, shouting out if we were hurt.

"No," replied Coffin; "but I have lost my box of matches."

The boatswain found his, and lighted up, showing to our wondering eyes a long low cave, trending towards the left, with stalactites elongating from the roof, like icicles, of all lengths and shapes.

Some looked like organ-flutes, and others like carved pillars with the bases reversed, snow-white, or rather like semi-transparent alabaster, which gave out faint prismatic sparkles from the edges nearest to the light.

How I longed, as I looked around me from the saturated, ice-cold floor, with the carbonate of lime laden drops, which through long ages had produced this fairy grotto, that we could have light enough to reveal to the full extent its rare beauty.

"We shall have some light beyond this part; let us on; the water is not deep," said the chief.

"It is marvellous!" I cried out with enthusiasm.

"Oh, this is nothing! You will see by-and-by."

Once more we stumbled on between the pillars, sometimes over the knees, sometimes only up to the ankles; ice-cold water, which chilled us to the marrow, causing our teeth to chatter and our flesh to creep with the unusual chill; the air, however, felt fresh enough, for which we were thankful.

After traversing for some hundred or so of yards, we had the indications of light filtering between the fretted arches and pillars—a pallid green light, which made the stalactites and stalagmites gleam as if cut from emeralds; then we could do without our matches.

Onward, with the light increasing; softly stealing through the alabaster carvings, like that tender ocean twilight which the pearl-diver sees when he is groping amongst the coral shapes and rare oyster-shells.

The ceiling ever rising as we advanced, and the walls getting wider, with grander shapes and more massive pillars. How rare the colours gleamed, with that soft light playing upon those wonderful natural sculptures! I could not keep my eyes from them, but stumbled and tripped over the unequal water-laved floor as I went, landing often upon my hands and knees, through my inattention, to the ground.

And yet that was wonderful enough, also with those rich gleams softly reflected and trailing over it; it looked as if we were passing over smooth glass, with gilded and painted filigree work above us, and halls of rarest art-work beneath.

It was a vision of unearthly loveliness, which impressed even the most stolid amongst us, so that none of us would have felt surprised had the pillars and domes become suddenly crowded with elves and spirits.

An unearthly place though, with no sign of life

except the tinkling music of falling drops, or the ruder discordancy of our own splashing feet; these drops fell on all sides with a rhythmic persistence and cadence, like the slow but everlasting ticking of Time, they counted moments from the exhaustless store-house of Eternity, every drop doing its duty, the slow but sure work of centuries.

Sometimes we started to see, what we took to be a human figure or rather a marble statue in front of us, opaque in the body, but limpid at the edges, a freak of nature giving it this semblance, or perhaps the petrified enshrinement of some long-passed-away race who had here found an everlasting niche.

No one spoke as we passed through these wonders; we strode swiftly on, taking no thought of time, dazed and awed into silence by the splendour about us.

We had passed the light without discovering where it came from, it was all so diffused and gradual that it was only when we had turned our backs upon it and felt darkness creeping about us again that we knew we had left it.

Once more the match-striking and groping along in the dark, but we were gradually rising and getting on to dry ground.

We saw too, that the stalactites were disappearing and the rocks about us becoming more solid and dingy in their tones.

A gradual rise for about half a mile, with the atmosphere becoming closer and more oppressive, and then a stretch of fairly level ground.

"Take care now," said the chief at this point; "we are coming to holes."

Once more the tar-yarn was lighted up, and we had to pick our steps carefully, for at places the floor

dropped suddenly several feet, down which we had to climb, twisting to the left or the right, without warning, so that often we ran butt against a rock before we were aware, and had to turn sharply.

In places also there were well-like holes, like a huge honeycomb both in the walls and roof, as well as under our feet, holes which we had no means of sounding, most likely shafts leading to lower and upper tiers of caverns.

At one part Hiram Coster dropped the pipe which he had been smoking in a sudden stumble that he made on the brink of one of these pits. We stood to listen if we could hear it break against the bottom, but shuddered with one accord, when, after pausing for a moment or so, that no sound rose up of concussion, although at this part our very breathing seemed to waken louder echoes.

After this we trod with lighted matches and very carefully, and with bated breaths, along the edges of these soundless pits, breathing for the time freely when we once more came to firm ground.

It was up or down after this, with twistings about, ever tending towards the east; we reckoned that we had passed over some miles of underground, and felt that the outlet could not be far off.

"What is the time?" asked Hiram of Mr. Coffin at this point, for we were all feeling more or less exhausted.

Our leader pulled out his chronometer from his waist pouch, he being the only man who carried a watch, and looked at it with the aid of a vesta.

"A quarter-past four o'clock; we have been underground for over three hours and a half."

"One more half-hour will take us out; we are past the most dangerous parts."

"A good job too, for I am on my last box of lights."

We trudged on after this with more confidence, lighting up only at intervals to get the general outline of the ground as we had done at the start.

It was now pretty easy travelling, and we felt we were coming towards the surface, for the rocks became more split up about us, with quantities of earth and roots appearing between the crevices.

Long roots like ropes which drooped at parts from the ceiling, and hung in air, or sought the ground, travelling along the stony places until they found earth to penetrate.

As we walked over the yards of darkness, between the match-strikings, we frequently tripped over these earth-seeking roots, or felt one of the suspended tendons strike against our heads with a touch too strongly suggestive of snakes to be pleasant—a slight flip of the root which rebounded from us, leaving a stinging sensation behind it.

Once more we came into the realm of bat-dom, raising clouds of them at every flash of the light; we were approaching the earth surface, we felt sure, but we were not there yet, as we could feel from the density of that earth and manure impregnated atmosphere, which caused us to stumble along with perspiring bodies and throbbing brows.

At one part we got a great fright, and nearly lost the thumbless butcher. The last box of vestas being nearly two-thirds done, and the rope-yarn all used up, it became necessary for our leader to use them only at very long intervals, taking for granted much of the way beyond the circle which it illumined. We would push on one after the other, for the way was becoming

rapidly narrower, guiding ourselves by touching the projecting edge of rock on each side.

The last match struck had shown us a good stretch of level ground, so that we strode on with confidence, touching one another for company as we marched.

Hiram happened to be by chance in front of me, and I had my hand lightly against his back, half pushing him along, when suddenly I felt him disappear, while his yell of dismay caused me to pause in time.

A yell which begun on the level, and ended below me, stopping abruptly.

"What is it" cried Mr. Coffin from the front, and hastily striking one of his few remaining matches.

"Hiram has fallen somewhere."

"Hold on, mates," came up the harsh tones of our butcher from beneath my feet.

Captain Coffin came back with his light and revealed a slit in the rocks just beside the wall where we had been passing, and down which Hiram had fallen.

"Are you hurt, Hiram?" we cried, for we could not see him even with the light.

"Not yet, but I am hanging over a hole; quick, mates, help me up."

The aperture passed from our sight with a steep incline, down which the unfortunate man had slid. Quickly the old chief pushed in his spear to the hilt.

"Do you feel the spear?"

"No, but for God's sake be quick! I am slipping."

"Here!" shouted our leader, "give me your hand, Zeno; I'll go down and give him the spear."

We all joined hands in the dark, and prepared to pull, while Mr. Coffin let himself down as far as he could, pushing the spear in front of him.

"I have it now, haul away!" cried Hiram Coster from below, and we pulled, getting him out safely.

"By the holy Moses, but I guess that was the narrowest squeak I ever had for my life!" observed Hiram, wiping the beads of perspiration from his brow, while we lighted another match to see if he was all right.

"I don't know where I would have been by this time, if it had not been for a roughness in the rock, for my legs were hanging over, and the stones rolling down without reaching the bottom. I have half a dozen in my shirt heavy as lead, which rubbed in as I slid down, and which I mean to keep as mementoes of this blasted hole."

He held up one of them as he spoke, a piece of shapeless clay about the size of an egg, and crammed it into his pocket with the other pieces which had got entangled inside his shirt by the open neck, and stuck at his belt.

"Let us get on now," observed Mr. Coffin, turning once more and striding along.

No more accidents occurred, although we took care to feel with our spears and rifles each foot of ground in front of us.

Another turn and the second last match was struck when we saw a glimmer of light upon the right side of the rocks.

We were nearing the open; with quickened steps we followed our leaders, able now to see the sides as we advanced.

Past rocks with mosses clinging to their under sides, and water dripping over their surfaces, making glistenings in front and lustre depths alongside.

Nearer, the grasses are covering the floors in parts,

and from the roof hangs small-leaved creepers and reeds, while the light is trailing in like the light from a vine-covered arbour.

At last the entrance gleams about thirty yards in front;—with the blessed glow of day making emerald and cairngorm patches of the green leaves which cluster into it and shut out the blue beyond.

We are in an arbour of greenery, with a soft carpet of rich grass under our feet, tendrils of rich flowers dripping and trailing about us as we flung ourselves down amongst them with a universal cry of "Thank God for the light!" and a long breath of perfect enjoyment.

While we lay revelling in the freshness, our impassive native chief crept to the entrance and cautiously drew aside the branches which covered us, letting in a white flood of radiance amongst the green, while he peered outside.

"I guess I'll be content with one of these keepsakes," said Hiram, putting his hand into his pockets and bringing out a couple of the lumps of clay; "they are a little too weighty to carry far."

"Halloa! Hiram, what is it that you have?" cried Zeno, making a clutch at one of the lumps.

Hiram had been crushing them about in his huge palm, the loose particles breaking away as he rubbed.

"No, Zeno, you don't, boy. I thought they were extra heavy for their size."

"What is it?" cried Mr. Coffin, who had been looking to his gun, while he waited on the report of the chief.

"Gold, captain, that's all," replied Hiram, polishing the pieces on his trousers, and showing the fat round corner of an unmistakable nugget. "And to think I was lying amongst it, hearing it rattle off to eternity,

and thinking it only rubbish. I'm a good mind to go back to that pocket."

"No, Hiram, content yourself with what you've got, even though you risked your life to get it."

But Hiram turned over the nuggets regretfully in his hands, murmuring in a discontented voice. "Only five small bits when I might have had fifty, had I only known."

I noticed Zeno's dark eyes gleam with a covetous light as he saw the two pieces disappear into his friend's pocket, but at the moment my attention was attracted by the old chief at the doorway, who whispered, "Hist! Be quiet and come here."

Edward Coffin sprang to his feet and hurried out, the rest of us following, while the old chief, with a glow of triumph on his face, pointed over towards the east.

"They are over there, see."

Through the leaves, as we parted them, a fair landscape burst upon us.

A broad valley stretching away over miles of green flats, mostly grass-covered, with detached groups of trees, and terminated by a lofty range of hills at about eight or ten miles distance.

We were above it about two hundred feet, and so could see its full extent, with the hills on all sides, rising and wooded to the summits.

The sun was shining straight over the hill above us through which we had passed, laving the landscape with its mellow brilliancy, and making every object distinct with the shadows behind.

The river wound along at our feet and through that broad valley, disappearing in the extreme distance like an azure serpent, where the mountains dipped on both sides with more distant ranges behind.

And on the bosom of that silver river we saw floating two large canoes about a mile off from where we stood and watched.

They were being rowed alongside of each other, the one much more crowded with natives than the other.

And in the crowded canoe we caught a glimpse of white at the stern, intermingled with a patch of bright orange.

The white we recognized and the orange, for Ah Lee liked gay colours, and on the day of the battle had worn a bright suit of orange-coloured pijamas with red spots.

Mrs. Wilmore and the cook bound together.

Captain Coffin, as he looked, slowly lifted his rifle, and pointed the muzzle at the retreating canoes, when the old chief, put his hand up, saying,—

"Don't fire, or they will kill them at once. We will get them all to-night."

"Right," replied Coffin huskily. "Besides, they are too far off. I suppose it will be best to wait!"

Intently we watched the retreating canoes; they were paddling swiftly along, but with the sun-rays full upon them, we could make out their numbers, and notice many details from our hidden position.

Yes, they were alive, for, as we looked, we saw Ah Lee make a movement as if to change his position while at the same moment the figure in white lifted her head higher, upon which one of the natives sitting near struck at them with the blunt end of his spear.

"Curse you, curse you, for that blow!" hissed our leader between his teeth, "not a man shall escape to-night if I live to reach them."

His eyes were flaming with the old flame as he

watched this cowardly blow upon the captives, while his hand played with his rifle.

Slowly they receded until they became a couple of specks upon the river. I thought as we were looking I could make out Jabez, but they were too far off to distinguish his colour from theirs; but in the second canoe I saw something bound and lying in the bottom.

We watched with eager eyes until they had passed behind the point of the nearest hill, then our leader turned about, saying,—

"Now, boys, sit down and make a square meal, for you have some bloody work before you can taste your breakfast."

CHAPTER XII.

REVENGE AND REUNION.

GRIMLY but eagerly we all fell to our supper, while waiting for the sun to go down; for we dared not venture out by daylight, in case any of the enemy might have been left as outposts.

The English portion of the party alone ate; the natives had not tasted food since leaving their homes, nor would they until they were avenged, it being considered unlucky either to taste food or speak when on the war-trail.

So, with the exception of the chieftain, none of his followers had uttered a word, either to one another or to us; he seemed, by virtue of his office as commander to be exempt from the vow of silence.

So, while we devoured the biscuit and preserved meat which we had brought with us, the old chief sat a little way off, surrounded by those of his followers who were not watching the country from the cave-mouth; he had appointed them for this duty, and they now stood motionless amongst the leafage, watching with keen eyes for any sign of movement on the plain beneath.

The chief, with his young warriors, were busily engaged in seeking for an omen from the spirits for the expedition, and their mode was peculiar.

An old cocoanut, which had been brought for the purpose, was broken open, and the contents scraped into a large leaf. While the scraping was going on, others were employed gathering leaves, cutting them and placing them alongside the scraped cocoanut. When the scraping was finished, the old chief and five of the others sat round and mixed all together, he chanting all the time in a slow, solemn tone.

When the mixing was finished, they all stood up, while he mumbled something and gave a loud shout, taking the mixture and flinging it over their heads, chests, and backs.

The young men next went in a body to the dark part of the cave, and waited in a circle with hands clasped, while the old man sat by himself, seemingly engaged in prayer or incantation, and looking very anxious.[1]

A moment more and he rose, as if satisfied, while the young men flung themselves on the grass in careless attitudes of ease.

"Well, what is it to be?" asked Mr. Coffin, when the chief joined him again.

"Very good; we shall save your friends, and wipe out the tribe who did the wrong. No more shall they steal upon us in our sleep and carry off our young lads and maidens, to devour like wild beasts; no longer shall they have a name by the sea-shore or on the mountains; for we will slay the mother with the babe unborn, and dash the suckling child against the stones; their pigs shall be ours, and the gathered stores of rice and yams."

[1] I am indebted for the above description of incantation to the Rev. James Chalmers, of New Guinea, as commonly practised at the North Foreland.

The old man chanted out this reply, with a savage glare within his eyes, swinging his sinewy arms about him while he sang :—

"Our arrows shall to-night be drunk with blood, and our spears shall devour flesh, while the smell of the unburied shall reach the nostrils of eagles in the unknown West, and bring them over the land in eager crowds, to bury their heads in the blood of the slain.

"As they have made our mothers childless, so shall their mothers be childless in the land; as they have devoured our flesh, so shall their flesh be devoured.

"Smite them all, my sons, and spare them not; slay the strong men and the soft women, so that we may have peace on our mountains."

How strangely familiar these words, which the old chief chanted, seemed to me! Had I not read them at home? Or was man the same now as three thousand years ago, with the same ideas of revenge and blood surging in his brains? We had now finished our hasty repast, and, pitching the remains down in the cave, prepared to move on, taking nothing with us except our arms and ammunition.

The shadows of evening were falling quickly over the land as we made our exit from the cave,—long shadows which lay over the valley making the ground dark and sombre, with the river only gleaming out clear from the stretch of amber grey.

Overhead there were golden feather-clouds, flying lightly over the deeply blue vault, getting red and green as the light kissed and left them; while the distant mountains glowed out ruddy against the mellow horizon, and then became black and indefinite.

A swift changing of colour in the sky above those distant ranges, as we clambered down to the river-side,

golden yellow to soft green, crimson to purple, purple to green-blue, and then, as we reached the open plain, night, with its bright clusters of brilliant stars.

A night clear and dewy, with a new moon, which rose and hung, sickle fashion, for a little while over the mountain, and then sank below with its attendant star, leaving to us a silent and dark, grass-covered plain to traverse for the first two hours of evening, an easy road and well known to our native guides.

We bore nothing with us now but arms and ammunition; we had our rifles, and our waist-belts stuck with pistols and knives, with sufficient rounds of ball cartridges to keep us firing all night, if necessary; the natives being armed *cap-à-pie* with all their war implements—bows, arrows, spears, clubs, shields, and man-traps. Some of our men also carried these terrible weapons over their shoulders, besides the implements to which they were accustomed.

We were all silent now, for we did not wish to attract the attention of any stragglers who might be abroad from the village we were bound against, which lay over the first low range of hills in front of us, and about a couple of miles from the shores of that gulf called Milne Bay; so that after this open plain was safely got over, we had a bush-track all the way.

When at length we got to the rising ground, we found the track approach nearer to the river; for although we could see no difference in the lie of the country, the natives, having a keener sight, took to the river, climbing over the boulders by the banks.

As we approached the hills, the river became in parts shallow, so that we found it easier to wade through it than climbing over the banks; and the natives, going in front, showed us when to take to the

water, and when it was safer to clamber over the boulders.

At length we left the river to our left, and struck out all together to the bush, from which we felt we were approaching the village, and we all trod lightly over the underwood, pausing at intervals while some of the young natives went noiselessly forward, coming back for us when they were sure that the trail was clear.

In this way we stole through the thick forest, ascending the hill as we went, until we got to a part where the cliffs projected from the trees; then we found that we had reached the scene of our revenge.

A large village lay under the shelter of the bluff, on a cleared spot, surrounded by gardens of palm and banana trees, so that where we were we would have full command of all the streets, and could shoot the inhabitants at our leisure when we got to the open.

"Wait for a moment," whispered the chief, as he stole out of the thicket over towards the brow of the cliff, man-trap in hand. Down by the pathway stood a tall native, evidently a sentinel; we could just see his head above the cliff, though he had evidently left his post on the hill.

As we watched the chief approach his enemy, we felt a thrill of uneasy suspense. Would he have time to shout an alarm to those below?

The chief raised his man-trap, then paused, drew back quickly, and crept again to our shelter.

"He is not alone; there is a girl coming up the pathway; we must wait."

So we lay low amongst the bushes, and waited on a better chance.

There was a large fire burning in the main street;

we could see the tops of the flames leaping up above the rocks, and revealing the distant roofs and posts, with the trees behind; while from below rose the sounds of voices. Evidently a great and excited talking was going on, probably the defeated warriors telling the tale of their thwarted surprise, and about the deadly thunder-staffs of the strange allies.

We could hear sounds also of lamentation, and distant shoutings of rage and dismay; the mothers, wives, and daughters were weeping for their dead, while the men were thinking only of the defeat.

Presently we saw the pair of lovers—for such they proved to be—meet, and the bushy head of the outpost stoop, as he kissed her; after which they gradually approached to where we crouched watching them.

A handsome youth of about eighteen, entirely naked, and of perfect proportions, trailing his spear carelessly along the ground in his right hand, while the left arm encircled the equally naked shoulders of a buxom maid, who wore for clothing only a very thin and short coloured grass petticoat.

As they were between us and the ruddy glare and luminous smoke of the cliff-hidden fire, we could only see their proportions silhouetted, but we could hear by his murmurs, and her loving replies as she nestled up to him, that they had both forgotten duty, and were giving themselves up to dreams of a future never to be realized.

I turned to where the chief crouched, with his man-trap ready for the fling; and as I looked at his glittering eye, and as I read the coming doom of these young lovers, a profound pity filled my heart, with a desire to warn them of their danger, which at the moment would have been rank treason on my part,

until a few words from the pair recalled me to my duty, and steeled my heart once more.

They used sometimes different words to which we had been accustomed, and a *patois* which made even familiar words sound strange; but we could grasp the meaning of the sentences as they were rolled or lisped out.

"So they are going to cook the white pig to-night, Pélá?" observed the young man.

"Yes; he will be about done by the time your watch is over."

"If not, mind you bring me up a piece to taste."

"That you may depend upon, Peroko; only he is ugly, and will not taste nice."

"I suppose that is why they don't waste time feeding him?" said the negligent youth, laughing.

I felt that they were speaking about Jabez Carter, who was to be the first victim.

"Oh, they are stuffing him up just now; it is such fun, Peroko, to hear him howling as they give him the bananas; he is an awful coward."

"I know all about him, Pélá; he was in my boat, and I thought we should have to knock him on the head as we brought him along; it was all howl and weep, like an old woman."

"But the white woman and the yellow man are brave, Peroko; they have not spoken since they were locked up; oh, they will be nice when their time comes!"

No pity expressed by this fresh young girl for the victims. Even in the midst of her sentimentalism, her mouth was watering in anticipation of the tit-bit, while the captives were only regarded in the light of tough or tender geese being fed up against the Christmas feast.

It was a love not engrossing enough to banish the thought of dinner, a selfishness too engrossing to have room for pity for others; the sensation of pity died out of my heart as I listened, and I thought only with impatience that they were keeping us back from our work.

At this moment, as they still stood with their backs towards us, Hiram Coster, who had been sitting upon a damp patch of earth, brought on the climax by giving way to a suppressed sneeze.

In an instant the lovers sprang apart, Peroko facing round, with his spear up; and then, like lightning, their doom was upon them.

The old chief took Peroko, and one of the other natives the girl; a swish through the air, as the man-traps were thrown over their heads, and a quick jerk forward, brought them both to the ground on their faces, with their throats pierced by the prongs.

A gurgling gasp broke from them as they fell; then a couple of dull thuds from the stone clubs silenced the fated pair for ever, and united their savage souls in the eternal marriage of blood.

"Wait another moment," said the chief, as he and three of his young men crept away on their bellies out to the open, after drawing the corpses into the cover.

He and one of the natives crept down one side of the hill, while the other two took the opposite side; a long time it seemed while we waited, listening to the sounds rising from the village, with our hands upon the triggers of our guns, and then we saw them creep back.

"The way is clear now," he whispered. "There were two other watchers, but we have settled them; come!"

We crept over the narrow path to the brow of the cliff and looked cautiously over. The whole of the villagers were awake and crowding the main street; for we saw that it was a large place, with over two hundred ordinary huts, and at different points tall spires, standing up from great Council or Dubo Houses; four of these spires we counted, each decorated with white skulls, which were suspended from the ends of ropes, and dangled amongst the red streamers and palm-ribbons.

Each Dubo House stood at the corner of a street with the huts lining both sides; one led to the river, which rolled blackly past the end houses on that side, with canoes drawn up on the banks, while the other three streets led down to the bay which we could see over and between the palm-trees, and on to the forest and hill where we now overlooked them.

Before the main Dubo House on the land side, the largest of the four, they had lit their fire, which the women were now feeding up with branches and limbs of trees, while the men were crowded about the platform, listening to some orators who stood upon the platform, and who were laying it off, as it seemed, altogether to their different group of listeners, who replied with deep exclamations and savage yells.

At one end of the square, away from the fire, we saw a group of women and old men painting one another with some black substance and howling as they did so.

We also noticed on a part where the ground was not so filled, a crowd of naked little boys and girls busily engaged with something on the ground, around which they were gaily shouting and waving their little arms as they danced.

While we watched a couple of old women came over and began whipping the children away with a pair of flappers made of some kind of hide.

As they thrashed the children about and drove them back from their game, we saw what it was.

Jabez, stripped stark naked, lying on the ground, bound hand and foot like a trussed fowl, with his stomach distended as if he had eaten too heavy a supper, and his face cleaner washed than I ever saw it before.

He was washed and dressed for the cooking, and his mouth, which he had opened to bellow, I suppose, they had stuffed chock-a-block with bananas, which supplied us with a reason why we had not heard his voice amongst the general clamour.

He had rolled over, and was watching the fire getting ready with goggling eyes, and with a face eloquent with horror; never a beauty in his unwashed state, he now fully justified the remark which Pélá had made about his ugliness; he was unmistakably ugly and mean-looking, which the supernatural freshness and spotlessness of his complexion intensified.

How they must have plotted and scrubbed that tallow skin to make it shine so rosy in the firelight as it now did, and what a trouble the old women must have had to remove the accumulations of years about the dirty hands and neck!

I felt that Jabez would never forget that wash in his lifetime, if he ever lived to escape.

But he was alive enough now, so that we felt satisfied about the others. They meant to cook him thus.

Near by where Jabez lay, and tied to a post, we found another absentee. Grip the demon hound, who must have followed them and been caught on the

way; they had muzzled him with native cords, and he was now lying on the ground, with his swathed head and nose pressed between his outspread paws, and seemingly paying no heed to his surroundings.

We felt glad to see them both alive, and as yet well, glad also that the wind was blowing towards us and that Grip sat with his face from us, otherwise the keen scent of the beast might have betrayed us.

"Lads," said Captain Coffin, "we must divide our party into four, and take them on all points; you, Wapira, go down this other side and skirt the village till you come to the sea-street with your braves; take this pistol, and fire it when you are ready for the rush, as we shall all be at our posts before you; don't be afraid of the thing." The old chief had hung back, and seemed in no haste to take the pistol. "Hold it this way, and fire it into the air, so it will not hurt any one, then rush straight on and kill as fast as you can; we'll meet you in that crowd; only guard your street, and let no one pass."

Wapira nodded, and began creeping down the hill with his forty fighting-men, in the direction indicated.

"Zeno, take five men with you and go to the river street, but don't begin the attack before you hear the pistol signal."

"All right," said Zeno, as he beckoned to five of his own friends amongst the crew, and next disappeared.

"Boatswain, you take five, go by the forest and bar that way; but, remember, keep as long as possible to the shadows, and when you hear the signal, fire a volley right into the thick before they can separate, and then pick off all those who rush towards you."

The boatswain and party left at the word.

"Hiram Coster, you stay where you are with three of the lads and Johnny to load for you, you can command the village and pick off all you see escaping."

"All right, boss," replied Hiram, sitting down calmly.

"Let me go with you, sir," said I to our leader.

"No, lad," he replied sternly. "Remember the first duty of a good soldier or sailor is to obey orders; where you are you will be of some use, but with me, you would be in the road. I am now going to liberate Mrs. Wilmore, and so before the fight begins, I shall bring her up to you to protect presently."

"Where is she?"

"Do you see that hut nearest us, the only one with the door closed? that is where they must be. Come, lads, I'll post you in your places."

And as he spoke he began his descent with the five remaining men.

* * * * *

The last burden of faggots had now been piled upon the fires, making for the moment a sudden darkening of the scene, and great volumes of smoke spark-laden to rise and spread over the sky, and we could see that Jabez's time had almost come, for the speakers had all but one finished their orations, and that one appeared to find but indifferent ears for to his observations.

He was a white-haired old warrior with stiff limbs, so that his words, like his motions, were slow and lacking in fire; the young and middle-aged men standing before him turned their heads towards the unfortunate hero of the hour, and seemed to find the sight of him much more interesting than this sage discourse.

Now the flames were leaping over the faggots and making things bright and distinct once more; I was watching the houses nearest to us on the hill road, for the reappearance of Captain Coffin and his men. Yes, there they were creeping between the posts and keeping as much in shadow as possible.

In the square the old women, cooks and fire-feeders were stirring the flames with long poles, while underneath it was all red light and glow, with a heat so intense that it even reached to us where we waited.

I saw Captain Coffin plant his men where they could command the mass in the shadow of the last house nearest the square, while he prepared to move off alone towards the back of the barricaded door.

Between the posts he swiftly stole with his rifle in his hand, and his belt bristling with pistols, a ray of fire-light now and again revealed to us his progress as he crept closer and closer to the hut where we felt the prisoners were; his white shirt revealed his whereabouts, and made us fear lest the enemy would see him also.

But, no, they all appeared to be too busily thinking upon the coming feast towards which Jabez was to contribute. The old women had now left the fire, and were stooping over the victim, adjusting him finally before lifting him into position.

"Curse it, that dog has smelt the capting, and will spoil fun!" growled Hiram at this moment.

Grip had risen to his feet, and was sniffing the air in the direction of the closed door, while half a dozen native dogs were rushing about the posts as if they also smelt something unusual.

Two or three of the young men looked at Grip

and the direction he was fixing his eyes upon, but without moving from their positions round the Dubo House. I felt that if Edward Coffin once managed to get in, he would not be particular how boldly the rush out was made.

He has reached the piles of the house, and disappeared into the darkness behind, while I can make out shadows over by the river end, showing that Zeno and his party have reached their posts, and are only waiting on the signal from Wapira.

Meantime the position of poor Jabez is decidedly becoming momentous in the extreme, the old cooks have placed a long pole between his hands and feet, to which they have braced him tightly, and now, despite his piercing cries, for he has managed either to swallow or spit out the bananas, and is yelling lustily, they are pushing him and the pole along towards the fire, while the young men gather about and jeer at the victim's contortions as they begin their death-dance.

At last, when we are getting nearly too excited on our point of observation to hold out much longer, the signal pistol is fired, followed by one of the most blood-curdling yells I ever heard as Wapira and the half of his followers rush into the open.

The yell is followed up by ringing shouts from the other three streets, as the boatswain, Zeno, and Edward Coffin's party discharge a united volley into the masses about the fire, stopping to reload, but all the while shouting at the pitch of their voices.

We are all busy on the rock top while this is going on, I loading as fast as I can, while Hiram and

the three men are picking off all the stragglers who appear inclined to fly.

At the first volley poured in from the three sides, the natives, who number our party five to one, stood appalled, looking at one another and the men who had fallen, but at the second volley they woke up, and caught at what weapons were nearest, and went for the enemy to which they were most accustomed, Wapira and his men, the women who had been pushing Jabez huddling down beside the pole with their faces down, and their skinny hands clasping the back of their necks.

At this moment I saw what made me blind and deaf to all other sights and sounds, Edward Coffin rush from the rear end of the house with Mrs. Wilmore and Ah Lee beside him.

Mrs. Wilmore was in the centre of the two men. I noticed, as she ran with dishevelled golden hair flying behind, that she was barefooted and the upper part of her dress nearly torn from her. I saw her gleaming feet and shoulders as they fled towards the hill road, while the five men held their fire till they would get past them.

"Quick, boy, another gun, and load like blazes!" Hiram shouted, as he discharged one of the rifles in the direction of the running three. As I loaded I looked, and saw that about a dozen young warriors had left the main body, and were rushing like antelopes after the prisoners and their rescuers.

Three fell before the well-aimed shots, and then we could fire no more, because they were all on a line, but only wait upon our opportunity.

We saw Coffin and Ah Lee stop in the middle of the square and face their prisoners, while Mrs.

Wilmore ran on alone towards the five sailors, who had now advanced to receive her.

She is safe, behind the body of men, and is leaning pantingly against one of the posts, unable to go further.

"Ah! dash it, I can't stand here no longer looking on!" shouts Hiram at the moment that our leader had discharged his rifle almost in their faces, and was now blazing away with his pistols. "Come on, boys, we'll have a go at the mill also."

He does not wait to get down by the pathway, but swings himself over the brow of the cliff, landing on and crushing a hole through the thatch roof, and next moment is amongst them with his rifle clubbed and surrounded by naked figures.

The rest of us rushed down the hill helter-skelter, rushing along the street and into the fighting masses, now all confusion.

In a moment more I was at the side of Mrs. Wilmore.

"Ah, Johnny, Johnny, stay by me, and do not let them get me again!"

She flung her lovely bare arms about me, dragging me with her to the ground, the sleeves of her dress were both torn away, and the body and skirt in rags, but she had no thought of all this in her mortal terror, and I, remembering how she had been stolen from us before, resolved that I would not leave her again, much as I longed to be in the fight.

Loosening her arms from about my neck, I managed to scramble to my feet, while she clung to my legs and crouched on the ground. I then saw in the fire-gleam, with mad fury, that her bare shoulders and back were all stained with blue bruises where the savages had

lashed her along, and so I stood watching a chance to shoot whenever I could do so without hurting our friends.

A bloody battle raging in front of me, with the air filled with shrieks and yells. Jabez was there lying near the fire and feeling uncomfortably warm, although not near enough to roast, but adding to the general outcry with his wild bellowing, although no one had any leisure to think about him then.

Grip stood wildly tugging at his rope with his hair on end, and smothered yelps of impotent rage coming from his muzzled jaws.

Edward Coffin was on the ground, and Ah Lee stood astride over his body, keeping the enemy at bay with the rifle clubbed, and keeping moving rapidly about, while the young men tried to lunge at him with their spears.

The ground was covered with dead and dying figures, while detached groups were still fighting furiously, but the main masses were pressing towards the part where Wapira and his men were yelling and fighting.

Few shots were fired now, for they were at close quarters. I noticed with dismay that our native friends were retreating before the overpowering numbers, while our other men had enough to do by themselves to be able to help.

Hiram must be down, for I could not see his bulky figure, and Zeno, but the boatswain was still to the fore, with his whistle between his teeth, blowing shrilly to encourage his men and striking out right and left.

"What is that?" cried Mrs. Wilmore, leaping up to her feet, and pushing her long hair from her small ears, the better to listen. "My husband's voice! my hus-

band's voice! Oh! thank God, we are saved, we are saved!"

She fell upon her knees in an ecstasy of joy, while I looked at her almost with fear, for I thought she must be dreaming or else going mad.

Meantime the main body of the cannibals, over two hundred strong, were pressing upon the remnant of Wapira's band, who, although brave enough, could not withstand for long the onslaught of such odds; they were struggling now in the narrow street with the shadow of the houses making confusion doubly confused, and gradually yielding step by step. I could see that in another moment they must turn their backs and fly, the thought of which was frightful to us all.

Then, even as I expected the rush to take place, I saw a sudden change in the rear, a sudden stoppage of the onward crush, while from the darkness where our sable friends were struggling came a full volley of musketry, followed by ringing cheers, which only British throats could give vent to, and the cannibals turned their faces round in a panic of fear and rushed frantically back into the square.

Another well-directed discharge broke them up once more as they were attempting to fall into order, and then as the firelight gleamed on white and dark faces, rushing from the black street, they broke up with awful shrieks of dismay, and dashed headlong down the lane leading to the river, knocking down friends and enemies in their headlong rush.

Hurrah! hurrah!! hurrah!!! It was our own *Flying Foxites;* Captain James, with his hat off, and his grey thin hair flying about his bare head; Mr. Wilmore, with his noble face glowing with the passion of the moment; the pelican purser, gawky as ever, but

making his long arms and ungainly legs work terrible execution on the naked backs and bushy heads; my old favourite, Mr. Griffin, and all the rest.

They saw us as we saw them, but as yet we had no time to recognize one another, we had beaten the cannibals off for a time, but we must follow up our advantages, for they were yet two to one of us.

Through the square they poured without a pause, Wapira and his braves, a little band they appeared to be, as they rushed on alongside of our white friends, but they were inspired with renewed courage.

Down the narrow street, between the houses, while the fire-gleams shot behind them, and gilded the bare backs of the flying savages, clubbing and hewing, and shooting as they pursued.

The canoes were all drawn up high on the banks, so that they had no time to get hold of them, scores were slain before they got near the banks, dozens amongst the slime, where victors and vanquished splashed about up to the waist, and ended the battle that way by smothering those they had not stabbed as they ran.

Some few plunged into the river and tried to swim across, but the firelight showed their large heads to those on the bank, and so they had time to load again and again, and pot them easily.

I did not see Davis as they ran past me, but he was little, and might easily have been amongst them without me observing him, for at the moment I had hard work to hold back Mrs. Wilmore, and keep her from rushing after her husband.

Poor Edward Coffin, she had forgotten all about him in the madness of her ecstasy at this unexpected reunion, but I could see him where he lay on his back,

across a mound of dead bodies, his fine head hanging over and his white shirt reddened with the blood which was pouring out of his breast.

"Hold, men, for the love of God! we have had enough of carnage!" I heard the ringing voice of the missionary at this instant down by the sea-shore, and at the sound Mrs. Wilmore sobbed and trembled in my arms. "Oh, my husband! my husband! my husband!"

She gurgled out the repetition in a choking voice, while I held her so that she could not see that brave body, or the others, my own eyes half blinded with the hot tears which were running over my cheeks.

Another moment, and she was on her husband's breast, her golden tresses mingling with his iron-grey beard, while his strong right arm supported that shivering and tattered form.

"Davis!"

"Jack!"

We were together once more. My old boy-friend, looking sunburnt and freckled, with his red hair like the locks of an ancient Celt, wild-looking and long, and his shirt and trousers about as dilapidated.

* * * * *

An hour afterwards we were all sitting by the fire which the natives had lit for Jabez Carter, and he amongst us, sullen as usual, and done very red on one side, but clean enough for his own mother not to have known him.

We had no clothes to give him, for we were all, more or less, in a tatterdemalion state. But from one of the huts we had managed to get a woman's grass petticoat, with which he had to be content; although he did cower down, trying to hide his ungainly shanks like a cockney dressed in highland costume.

The women and children were allowed to run into the woods; but before this was permitted I thought that we were likely to have another battle with Wapira and his nineteen remaining warriors. He had come to exterminate the tribe, and did not forego his vengeance with a good grace, not until Mr. Wilmore threw himself in front of the wretched fugitives, rifle in hand, declaring that he would begin again if this favour was not granted.

Wapira gave in at this, and sat down to his pipe in passive silence.

Hiram Coster, the thumbless butcher, we found with two spears through him, one in his eye and the other in his heart. He had died game, with ten brained cannibals lying round him; his gun-stock smashed to pieces and the barrel bent nearly double in his relentless clasp, and his much-prized gold nuggets in his pocket.

Zeno also had met his fate like a hero. We found his handsome face undisfigured, with a fierce smile still parting the beautifully curved lips, and the white teeth gleaming. His powerful grasp had been upon the throat of a cannibal when the spear-thrust had finished him from behind; but the hand had not relaxed in its savage grip, for the dead foeman lay beneath him to the last. They were both noble-looking savages, so we did not separate that dead embrace, but buried them together next morning.

The pelican purser also had found peace, and his wife could at last get married again, without further scruples. We did not write an epitaph on his tombstone, because we had no tombstone to give the poor, brave, unlucky man, but we all thought it. "Here lies an unfortunate who never failed where duty was concerned, and who never gained a friend."

Yet he did not perish quite unmourned, for we all felt a tender regret when we laid him down into his last bed.

My master, as I shall always call Mr. Edward Coffin, was not quite dead, though nearly so. While we sat down to talk, he was lying on the softest couch the village could provide, with his wounds bandaged up, insensible to all about him; although, had he been conscious, he might have rejoiced even in his wounds, for Mr. Wilmore had used as lint a good portion of his wife's ragged dress, while her hand had aided her husband to wrap them round.

But the poor fellow was unconscious, and we only waited on the morning light to bear him back again with us.

After Mrs. Wilmore had got over the first wild paroxysm of joy, she told of our adventures since we had parted at the reef, praising Mr. Coffin up for his bravery and kindness and chivalry. She also said some sweet words about Ah Lee and myself, which made that worthy grin placidly, and me to blush with pleasure.

She said nothing about the wild passion which had frightened and harassed her so much, but she concluded by saying, "I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for Johnny and Ah Lee." And Mr. Willmore beamed upon us both his gratitude, and, after grasping us both warmly by the hand, began to tell us of his escape.

"There is very little to tell you, friends, about the last six weeks, that you have not yourselves experienced. We were drawn over the reef, and into the open sea, where we drifted for some days under that drowning rain, until we sighted land in the D'Entrecastaux group.

[3] "We pulled slowly round Cape Labillardiere, where we found the shores covered with vegetation so close to the sea that the branches of the larger trees were dipping right into it.

"Here we landed, and found, where the trees did not block our passage, that the brown sands on the beach were smooth and pleasant to walk along.

"After resting here for a little we once more went aboard. And after going along a lovely patch of mushroom-coral, where we saw fish of every shade darting about under us,[4] we brought up in a small bay, where we found a narrow belt of grass, with patches of bare brown sand.

"As we approached we wondered at its want of vegetation as compared with the other parts of this coast; but soon discovered the cause of this break, when we observed clouds of steaming vapours rising from the earth. We were in a region of hot springs and geysers.

"When we had pulled the boat up to the beach, near to a little rivulet we found a hole with water boiling and bubbling up; while at the bottom of the stream was a sluggish yellow scum, and a hard crust of some substance cast up from the hot-water springs into the clearer water.

"We tried these holes, and found them hot enough to boil a kettle; while the other part of the stream was comparatively cool.

"Going along the beach for a time, we came to a

[3] I am indebted for this description of Cape Labillardiere and Moresby Straits to my friend, Mr. Andrew Goldie, naturalist, of Port Moresby, New Guinea.

[4] Captain Moresby reported that there were no fish in these waters. Andrew Goldie assures me that he saw them as described.

creek, at the head of which I could see the same hot vapour; and, as the bed of the channel was covered with sands and pebbles, and we all wanted bathing badly, we threw off our clothes and plunged in, enjoying a regular hot bath.

"On the surface it was much hotter than below, so, wishing to discover the cause, I swam up the creek until I came to two branches leading right and left. The right branch was cold, while the left came down boiling hot; joining together, the lighter heated fluid floated upon the other.

"After our bath we went hunting, seeing no signs of natives about—at least the others did, while I went exploring up this singular hot-water creek. I discovered, as I advanced, other springs still more fiercely boiling up. These I found near the foot of a steep hill, the sides of which were densely covered with forest, with projecting masses of gold-bearing quartz and granite.

"Following the creek seaward again on the other side, I found myself entangled in a swamp with clumps of twisted palm-trees, and as I considered it too likely a place for alligators to be pleasant, I hurried on back to where the boat lay.

"When I got back I found that the hunters had returned, bringing with them some good specimens of bird life,—two grey-eyed and one small black and yellow fly-catchers, a loris bird, a kingfisher of a dingy yellow and black, a small owl, a cockatoo, several birds of paradise, a small parrot, green with a red head, a large pigeon, and a couple of young wild pigs.

"I skinned the birds and preserved them as well as I could, after which we cooked their bodies and the pigs by dipping them into the boiling springs. Two

dips and the hair and hoofs came off freely from the pigs, and a few more plunges made them delicious.

"We stayed here for about five weeks, hoping to get better weather. And every day's programme was nearly the same as what I have given to you,—hunting, eating, smoking, bathing, sleeping, or watching the rain coming down from our roughly constructed shelter.

"These hot springs must have had some non-fever quality, for none of us ever had a touch, although we all expected to be laid low, after the tremendous drenching and knocking about we had in that open boat in the rough waters of the gulf and our present low quarters. We went out daily, got wet through and remained so till night, all with ravenous appetites and the best of health."

"How could you eat, not knowing our fate, dear?" said Mrs. Wilmore, a little reproachfully.

"I may be termed a fanatic, but in our struggles with the surf that night when you and I were parted, I laid my case before God, asking Him plainly to keep you safely and restore you to me; asking, like the prophets of old, for a sign that my prayer was heard, and I got it, and the answer too. And then I had faith that the Lord would not depart from His word.

"In the hut I felt, all day and night long, that you were alive and not far away. Sometimes I seemed to hear you crying for me to come to you, and at these times I felt impatient to be once more on the way.

"Two days ago, the weather showing signs of clearing up, we took once more to the boat, getting into the strait opposite Mounts Maybole and Good-enough a little before sunset; the first clear sky we had seen for the past five weeks.

"To the left rose the lofty peak of Mount Good-enough, peeping through a thick bank of clouds. Between it and us lay a sleeping lake or lagoon in deep blue repose, like the waters of the strait which we were passing through; while right before us towered Mount Maybole, clad to the summit with dark green vegetation, and in some places fearfully steep and with abrupt spurs of granite quartz; some of these cliffs dipping right into and being reflected on the surface of those smooth waters.

"Near where we were passing lay a most lovely half-moon-shaped cove, with a smooth beach and broad flat of dark green, upon which we saw about forty natives sitting, silently watching us row past, without offering in any way to molest us.

"We did not land, as we wished to get as fast as possible to the mainland, where I had a presentiment that I would find you. But we saluted the natives, one of whom gravely rose and pointed to the setting sun at that moment dipping into the sea, all violet and gold; after which he resumed his seat, and we rowed on our way.

"Then the crescent moon rose and sank, and the clouds fell below the horizon like the sun, leaving all above clear and opalesque.

"After that, as daylight faded, the sky became a sparkling mass of stars. While on the sides of Mount Maybole we could see the native fires from the villages shining also like ruddier planets through a background of dense, dark scrub, showing how thickly this island was populated.

"All night we rowed along, with land on both sides, and the straits like a mill-pond; and next day were once more out of sight of land, and steering as well as we could calculate for East Cape.

"We passed it by daybreak to-day, and would have landed only that the natives came after us in large square-sailed canoes and harried us till we were once more out of fire of the land. They sailed faster than we could do, and only let us alone after we had fired into and sank one of their ships. At the sound of our guns, which could hit at such long range, they took fright, and retired, after picking up their wrecked companions.

"About six o'clock we landed about five miles lower down the coast, and had prepared our camp for the night when, as the darkness set in, we were attracted by this great fire, and some indefinite feeling, which I cannot now explain, to find out the cause.

"Had I thought that my wife was a captive, and threatened with death, I would not have waited on your coming; but as it happened, this ignorance proved to be our salvation. We went cautiously along, and got as near as we dared do; thinking it was some native feast, and wishing to discover their strength before showing ourselves. Thus we knocked about the woods, gradually getting nearer and nearer, when the sound of shooting came upon us like a revelation from Heaven. It was our friends, and in danger.

"We thought no longer of caution, but rushed on, coming in at the nick of time to prevent defeat, and to end all things satisfactorily, except for the blood of these benighted savages, which we have been forced to spill, and for which may God forgive us all!"

* * * * *

Early next morning some of the men went over to the cove where the boat had been left, and brought it up to the banks of the river; while the rest of us buried our companions.

We felt that we were watched by the few survivors

of this once dreaded tribe of man-eaters, who had fled to the woods, but we did not fear them now, and tried to create as good an impression as we could by leaving them their houses and goods intact.

It was mid-day when the boat drew up, and then very carefully we lifted down the still insensible Edward Coffin, and laid him in the stern, filling up a couch for him with soft grasses and boughs; so that he rested from the stern to the first seat, Mrs. Wilmore sitting down beside him under the awning we had raised to protect them from the burning sun.

Captain James, Mr. Wilmore, and Griffin, the boatswain, and what men we required to pull the boat, went with us round the coast, where we agreed to wait for the others at Eagle Point, who, with Wapira and his followers, were to take the canoes and go over the mountains and bring the men who were sick at the village down to us.

Grip went with Wapira's party, although they had a hard job to tear him from Hiram's grave. The beast had lain all night on his master, licking his face and howling woefully. And when they buried him the dog seemed inclined to stay there; but, with a rope round his neck, they dragged him at last away to the canoe. After all, even in the most graceless hound we find more devotion than in superior man.

We watched them paddle away past the bluff, and then took to our oars,—a very melancholy and silent company.

After we got well round the point of the North Foreland we found the wind fair and not too strong, and, hoisting our sails, drove easily through China Straits, with its grand mountain scenery, and by nightfall had

reached that lovely island which they now call Heath Island.

A peaceful and starry night, as we drew up to the beach and brought to anchor.

We did not land, or even go too close to the beach, for we were ignorant as to the natives there; so, as the night was warm, we just stayed where we were, and made our supper of what provisions we had with us; and then lay down, to get some sleep—at least those who were not appointed to watch.

Davis and I lay together, cuddling once more, at the bottom of the boat; while Mr. Wilmore sat at the stern, holding his wife's head upon his shoulder. Captain James and Mr. Griffin took the first watch.

Silence, except for the lullaby of lapping waters about us, as we gradually fell asleep.

* * * * *

Suddenly we all started up, wide awake, with the exception of Edward Coffin. Our captain was making a speaking-trumpet of his voice, and shouting out, "Ahoy there! Ship ahoy!"

There, about half-a-mile distant, with the waters surging past her, loomed up the black opaqueness of hull and bulging side-sails, with the light swinging half-way up.

"Ahoy there, what is it?" came back hoarsely. While we heard the rattling of chains, as the vessel swung round.

"A shipwrecked crew, coming aboard."

"All right, come along," was wafted back, like the sweetest of music.

Then the stone which did service for an anchor was drawn up from the bottom, and the oars bent as the men pulled with a will from the land; while

the waters hissed, and threw up myriads of blue sparks.

We were saved, and we laughed hysterically in our sudden happiness. While the ship's bell rang out the time as we rapidly drew closer :—

One ! two ! three ! four ! five ! six ! seven ! eight !—
EIGHT BELLS.

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